

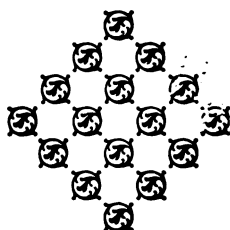


# Art and Beauty

By

MAX SCHOEN

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*For*  
**Lillian**



## PREFATORY NOTE

In these pages I have tried to present in an unpretentious, and in as brief, concise, and clear a manner as is within my power, what I have learned after years of sincere searching, about art, artists, and artistic activity, from those who have a right to speak, the creators themselves. I have done so, in so far as I have deemed it advisable, in the words of the original writers themselves, hence the unusual amount of quoted material, for which, I suspect, critics will take me to task. But I have not written for critics. I have written for myself and for those who seek to understand rather than to judge.

M. S.

THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,  
February, 1932.



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTORY

### THE NATURE AND OBJECTIVE OF ÆSTHETICS

Æsthetics is that region in the land of science whose borders of investigation are known as experiences of beauty, and whose soil is particularly favorable for the production of a crop called *art works*. This land of beauty and art has been visited numerous times by intrepid explorers, the æstheticians, who have given accounts more or less detailed, but always enthusiastic, of their discoveries. In most instances, however, the explorers met a cold reception on their return home, while the reports of their findings were either scorned or severely criticized.

Now since we are about to venture into this apparently hazardous region, it will be most advisable that we acquaint ourselves with what has been and is being said about the æstheticians and their findings, examine the charges, and see who is at fault, the explorers or their critics. There must be a misunderstanding somewhere, for among the explorers are some of the greatest minds of the ages, while their critics are men whose serious interest in art is beyond question. We must take this step at the very outset of our own adventure in order to fortify ourselves against several risks and hazards that a mental journey of this sort entails. Our purpose, then, in examining the charges of the critics against the æstheticians is simply to find out the better what the æstheticians are truly trying to do for us.

What do the critics say? Here are several samples of their complaints: One of them writes that: "It is improbable that more nonsense has been written about æsthetics than about anything else; the literature of the subject is not large enough for that."<sup>1</sup> Another is quite certain that, "any man

<sup>1</sup> Clive Bell, *Art*, New York, p. 3.

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who declares that he has distilled the essence of the beautiful and formulated a method whereby the work of art may be infallibly analyzed, its appeal explained and catalogued, and its esthetic value appraised and tested, is a self-deceived braggart or a fraud.”<sup>1</sup> A third claims that, “if we look shrewdly at the enormous accumulation of so-called criticism during our two thousand five hundred years of culture: this mountain of manuscripts, commentaries, biographies, histories, analyses of ‘styles’, classifications of art into kinds, attacks on art and defenses of art: we are stupified by the display of so multitudinous and ant-like an energy, but we cannot help also being stupified—may the human race forgive us—by its stupidity.”<sup>2</sup> A fourth writes, “Many attempts have been made by writers of art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find a universal formula for it. . . . Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have.”<sup>3</sup>

The charges against the æstheticians, as deduced from the above complaints, are twofold: (1) that they attempt the impossible, in that beauty and art are indefinable, as is indicated by the contradictory theories of the æstheticians themselves; (2) that they attempt the futile, in that, even were a definition possible, it would be of no aid to the appreciation of an art work.

An examination of these two charges will reveal to us the nature and objectives of æsthetics as a field of study and investigation.

### 1

#### THE POSSIBILITY OF A DEFINITION OF BEAUTY AND ART

The most obvious rejoinder to the claim that beauty is indefinable is that we define it every time we say “This is

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Craven, “Have Painters Minds?” *American Mercury*, March, 1927, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad Aiken, “A Basis for Criticism,” *The New Republic*, April 11, 1923, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, New York, 1903, p. ix.

### 2



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beautiful," for the term "beautiful" is descriptive of a certain unique attitude towards an object. If we went just one step farther and elaborated on the nature of this attitude, gave an account of it, we would have a definition of beauty. Now it is the failure to take this essential step by those who nevertheless claim to speak authoritatively on art that is responsible for the confusion that prevails in art criticism. For beauty is the realm in which art dwells, and without an understanding of the nature of that realm, art itself is condemned to misunderstanding. And it is not at all strange, but rather to be expected in the nature of things, that it is precisely those who cry loudest that beauty is indefinable who are most dogmatic in their pronouncements on art works. Thus, the very critic who proclaims in no uncertain terms that aestheticians are braggarts and frauds proceeds to rule out of the sphere of painting all works whose subject-matter is the nude, landscapes, still-life, the mural, and calls the modern painter an inferior being, dumb, dull, conceited. Now if beauty can not be defined, which implies that we can not know what art is, how can this critic pass judgment on that about which he himself claims nothing can be known? What he utters, in substance, is this absurdity: "I don't know what beauty is, and I don't know what art is, but I'll tell you what is and what isn't an art work." And it is invariably the very person who proclaims that of tastes there is no disputing, since what is beauty to one is not beauty to another, and that therefore a definition of beauty is absurd, who disputes loud and long with those whose tastes differ from his, and calls heaven and earth to witness that it is principally of his own tastes that there can be no room for dispute.

Now the net result of such lop-sided logic, a logic that proclaims that in art, the less you know the better and surer is your judgment, is that the critics get caught in their own nets and entangle the layman with them. A case in point is the hoax perpetrated by a resident of California, as reported in the daily press:

"Pavel Jerdanowitch" and the "disumbrationist school of painting" of which he was the "founder and supreme master," were exposed

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today as the whimsical revenge of a Californian upon critics who failed to appreciate the paintings of his wife.

Until Boston critics challenged the collection of Paul Jordan Smith, alias "Pavel Jerdanowitch," on display at the Vose galleries, the paintings had been admired by art patrons here, as well as in New York and Chicago. Jerdanowitch was hailed as a "modern genius" and even was offered \$1500 for one painting, the Vose galleries officials said.

Smith, an author, revealed August 14, 1927, that he was the "Pavel Jerdanowitch" who painted "Exaltation," "Aspiration," and "Illumination," three ultra-impressionistic pictures which won international fame.

He painted them, he said, without the slightest knowledge of painting, "just to prove most art critics didn't know what they were talking about."

"Exaltation," the most famous of his works, at one time, Smith revealed, was called "Yes, We Have No Bananas," and served as a fire screen in his home. "Illumination" shows a drunken man staggering home, and "Aspiration," a Negro washerwoman bent over a tub of suds with eyes on a bird in a tree.

The case of Mark Twain and music is a capital illustration of how the critics confuse the layman and lead him to pretend to tastes in art that he does not possess. It is Mark Twain who is reported to have said that he always applauded music he did not understand because then he knew it was classical. The critics told him what good music was, but they also told him that the beautiful in music could not be ascertained. Now good music is beautiful music, music that gives one an experience of beauty. Hence, if one does not know the nature of the experience of beauty how can one judge whether one's response to a musical selection is or is not one of beauty, and therefore whether the music one hears is or is not good music for himself? In a letter from Germany Mark Twain wrote:

Huge crowd to hear the band play the "Fremersburg!" I suppose it is very low-grade music—I know it must be low-grade—because it so delighted me, it so warmed me, moved me, stirred me, uplifted me, enraptured me, that at times I could have cried, and at other times split my throat with shouting. The great crowd was another evidence that it was low-grade music, for only the few are educated up to a point where high-class music gives pleasure. I have never heard enough classic music to be able to enjoy it, and the simple truth is I detest it. Not mildly, but with all my heart. What a poor lot we human beings

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are anyway! If base music gives me wings, why should I want any other? But I do. I want to like the higher music because the higher and better like it.

But it is not we who are the poor lot, but the critics who mislead us, who tell us in one breath that we do not know what beauty is, and in the next breath tell us what art work we should or should not appreciate. They do not know, but are nevertheless most ready to tell us what is what and why. Surely, if base music gave Mark Twain wings, aroused in him an experience of beauty, why should he want any other? What other test is there as to what is good music for one, excepting that it does create the experience of beauty? And if it does, how can it be base music? And how can one get to like the higher, and how can it be higher, unless through that experience? How can one judge or evaluate it excepting by the standard of beauty? And how can any music be higher than by arousing that experience?

Apparently then, there must be something basically wrong with the contention that beauty is indefinable, for without such a definition art and art criticism must remain a wilderness of counter-charges, whims, fancies, and unwarranted judgments. Let us see, therefore, if we can get to the heart of the difficulty.

The widespread notion that beauty is indefinable arises from the failure to distinguish between the terms *art* and *beauty*. These terms are related, but not identical. Beauty is an experience, while art is an activity. If the art activity is aroused by the experience of beauty, it may result in a product which constitutes an adequate record of that experience, in which case the product is an art work. For the creator, then, an art work is a successful expression of an experience of beauty. For the layman an art work is any product which is an outgrowth of artistic activity and which arouses in him an experience of beauty. Hence, art, in general, is an activity for the expression of an experience of beauty, or a product that arouses an experience of beauty. The art work, however, which is an expression of an experience of beauty for its

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creator, may or may not be a stimulus for beauty to the on-looker, or it may be such for one person, and not for another. But this fact does not invalidate its significance as an expression for its creator. Nor does its failure to arouse beauty in one person detract from its value as an object of beauty for another person. Furthermore, there is beauty without art for both creator and appreciator. Not every experience of beauty gives rise to an art work, in that the artist may make no effort to give his experience bodily form, or in that his attempt to do so is unsuccessful, while the experience of beauty may be derived from a wider field of objects and occurrences than the limited realm of art works. The sphere of beauty is co-extensive with the whole realm of experience, only a small fraction of which ultimately finds its expression in works of art.

Now the objective of the æsthetician is twofold, namely, (1) to define the experience of beauty *irrespective of its source*, (2) to analyze the artistic activity in order to ascertain what an art work is in terms of its creator. Since an art work is a record of an experience and an activity, it is possible to determine what it is that impels it, what the steps are in its making, and what its objective is. In other words, in analyzing the artistic activity, the æsthetician also defines, by implication, the art work in which the activity culminates. But he does not define the art work objectively, that is, in terms of its material features. He does not say or imply that if a product possesses certain physical qualities it is an art work and will or should arouse an experience of beauty. He does not attempt to teach the painter how or what to paint, or the novelist how or what to write, or the poet how to write poetry, or the musician how to compose, or the playwright how and what to dramatize. This bold and impertinent task he leaves to the critic. Nor does the æsthetician make the foolish attempt to define an art work objectively for the appreciator. It is quite evident to him that the same stimulus may give rise to a variety of reactions in different persons, or even to the same person on different occasions. He is also

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quite fully aware of the fact that a variety of stimuli may arouse the same or a similar response in several individuals. Thus the same article of food may give one person a stomach ache, another a headache, and agree with a third, while a variety of foods may cause a like experience—stomach ache—in several persons. Hence, to define or describe the stimulus for a stomach ache in general terms is manifestly absurd, but to define or describe a stomach ache is perfectly possible. That is, an experience can be defined generally, but the stimulus for a certain experience can be defined only in specific cases, and even then it is impossible to state just why that particular stimulus should produce that particular effect. In other words, there is no saying why or when a certain object will give rise to this or that experience. But whenever the certain experience occurs, it is definable in terms of its salient characteristics. I can not say that this or that object, provided it possesses certain features, will give me an experience of beauty, for the object that is beautiful to me today may fail to be so tomorrow. But whenever I have the experience of beauty, and whatever its stimulus, my experience is the same in kind, differing only in intensity. Hence an experience is definable in general terms, as a certain state of being, although the cause for the experience is not so definable. It would be absurd to attempt a definition of a Romeo or a Juliet. But the experience of love has been very aptly defined by numerous writers, from the time of the author of *The Song of Songs* to the present day.

Now the æsthetician does not define an object of beauty, but he does attempt to define the experience of beauty. Again he leaves the impossible task of describing an object of beauty in terms of its physical characteristic to the critic who belabors him. The æsthetician simply tries to do for the appreciator what he attempts to do for the creator. The creator does something when he creates and the appreciator does something when he appreciates. Hence arises the question for both creator and appreciator: What is the nature of the activity whether creative or receptive? The æsthetician

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describes neither the product of the creator nor the stimulus object of the appreciator. His interest is entirely in analyzing the experience and the activity that lead to the birth of an art work—still born as it may at times be—and the experience aroused by an art work when that experience is called beauty. Consequently, the charge against the æsthetician that in seeking a definition of the nature of the experience of beauty he is setting up an objective standard for art works, that he is giving criteria in terms of which one may determine whether a certain art product is or is not beautiful, is absurd; it exists only in the mind of the critic whose stupefaction at the daring of the æsthetician comes primarily through his failure to understand what the æsthetician tries to do.

We see, therefore, that it is not the æsthetician who is inconsistent, and who attempts the impossible, but rather those who prefer these charges against him. The critic maintains that beauty is indefinable in the abstract, and then proceeds to set up standards for what is art or what is not art. It is he who dares tell the artist what to do and what not to do, the why, what, and how of art. The æsthetician, on the other hand, sets up no standards, dictates no procedures or objectives, but takes the creative mind in its labors for beauty, and the responsive mind in its search for beauty, and analyzes both phenomena in an objective and disinterested search for knowledge.

### 2

#### THE VALUE OF A DEFINITION OF BEAUTY

Pater's statement regarding the value of an abstract definition of beauty is both true and false. It is true that such a definition is no aid to the enjoyment of "what has been well done in art or poetry," but it is not true that it does not help us "to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have." Pater himself gives just such a "universal for-

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mula" for beauty, which he deplores in æstheticians, when he calls music the measure of all the arts, because music alone completely realizes a perfect identification of form and matter, and then proceeds to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in the arts by means of this universal formula for beauty. How else can one discriminate if not in terms of some standard other than one's own likes and dislikes. Does not one often like food which is anything but nutritious, while disliking other food which is nutritious? How is one then to discriminate between what is good food or bad food unless through a definition of food, in terms of which one may evaluate one's own tastes? In what other manner than a definition of beauty can one ascertain whether one's response to some art work is or is not æsthetic? Certainly all responses to art works are not of the nature of beauty. They may be ethical, utilitarian, moralistic, anything but æsthetic.

Unless then we make the apparently absurd claim that a response is one of beauty just because it is derived from an art work, we must have a universal formula for beauty if we are to evaluate our reactions to art, and use the word beauty with some precision. Now to discriminate does not necessarily mean to like and appreciate. Admiration is not necessarily appreciation. I may discriminate between my friends, X and Y, and conclude that X is more intelligent than Y, but at the same time I may prefer Y to X. I may discriminate between food articles X and Y and discover that X is more nourishing than Y, and yet prefer Y to X. I may discriminate between poets, X and Y, and conclude that X is a greater poet than Y, and yet prefer to read Y. There are many of us who prefer to read Edgar Guest to Robert Frost, although we are convinced that Frost is a poet while Guest is a sentimental rhymester. Intellectual discrimination and personal inclination are not inseparable. Now there is no need for a standard to determine one's likes and dislikes. But how can one discriminate, evaluate, unless by a standard other than one's tastes, namely, by a universal formula rather than per-

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sonal inclination. The claim that beauty is relative is not true. It is absolute, that is, its nature as an experience, its characteristics as an attitude, are the same whenever and wherever and to whomsoever it occurs. What is relative is the object that arouses it. Hence a definition of beauty is not only possible, but useful for discrimination and judgment, although it is no help to appreciation. It is of much value to be able to judge intelligently, even where appreciation is lacking, that is, to be able to draw a distinction between one's reaction to an art work and the significance of an art work as art. A novel may not appeal to one, and yet be a great work of art as a novel, just as an article of food may not taste good and yet be excellent as nourishment. The value of an art work *to me* is determined by my reaction to it, but its value as an *art work*, as a successful creative expression for its creator, is entirely independent of any one's reaction to it. While it is true, then, that of tastes there is no disputing, it is also true that of tastes there is evaluating, even of one's own tastes. This standard for discrimination, for evaluation, is supplied by a definition of beauty, a universal formula for it, the kind of experience it is whenever and wherever it occurs, how it differs from other experiences, such as the good, the true, or the useful.

In evidence that a definition of beauty is not only valuable as a standard of judgment, but that consciously or unconsciously we actually use such a standard, let us consider some problems in art that have been and are being widely discussed.

*Is art for all or for the few?* On both sides of this question there are ardent defenders and detractors. But ardor never answers a question with any degree of adequacy. It only intensifies the issue, besides confusing it. The "art for the few" champions can cite the history of art as evidence that works that were widely hailed in their day as art have disappeared, and some of those most severely denounced have survived, while the advocates of "art for all" can appeal to human nature with its universal craving for beauty. But such evi-



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dence proves nothing excepting that anything can be proven to suit the particular inclination or prejudice of the contender. Popular appeal can not be relied upon, says one side, since historically great art never had a popular reception. But history proves just the opposite, retorts the other side, for ultimately it is popular appeal that establishes the significance of an art work. Wagner and Keats may have been viciously denounced in their day but in the long run it was popular taste that vindicated them. But either side fails to take account of the crucial issue, namely, whether an art work is great because it survives, or whether its initial greatness is responsible for its persistence. And this crucial question can not be answered otherwise than by a definition of art, its place and function in human life, what craving it satisfies, and whether all human beings possess the appetite for art in like degree, and is the appetite satisfied by the same or similar food or does it call for a variety of foods. And if appetites differ in degree of hunger, what is the nature of this difference and what sort of art food do the differences call for? Invariably, in any contention both sides to the argument are at the same time right and wrong. Each side is right from its standpoint and wrong from the standpoint of the other. The "art for the few" side must base its standpoint on some feeling as to what art is. And likewise the "art for all" side. But neither states definitely what its standpoint is. Hence, the endless and fruitless discussion. Would it not be advisable therefore that the feeling be made articulate so that each side would understand what the other is talking about, and thus substitute disinterested examination for heated quarreling and bickering? We can not consequently deal with this question intelligently excepting by means of a clear-cut definition of art and beauty.

Then we have the question of *standard in art*. One camp proclaims that the sole standard is the individual response. The other camp counters that the value of an art work is inherent in the art work, and does not depend on the effect it produces, that an art work judges us, not we the art work.

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Now again both sides seem to be right and also wrong. If a product does not evoke beauty in one it is not an art work. On the other hand, it may arouse beauty in another, and hence it is an art work. But how can one and the same object be both an art work and not an art work? Where lies its basic value as an art work, within itself as an expression of the artist, or in its effect on the observer? Is an object necessarily an art work just because it appeals or gives pleasure? Experience answers no. I may read a novel, enjoy it greatly, yet also feel that its value as an art work is small or nil, as I may eat an article of food whose taste pleases me but whose value as food I know to be negative. There is therefore no necessary relationship between an effect, and the significance of the stimulus producing the effect in terms of itself. A judgment of value does not invariably depend on the effect produced. The standard for the value may be different from the standard for the effect. One standard is intellectual, in terms of the inherent nature of the object as belonging to a certain class, and fulfilling a certain impersonal function, the other is affective in terms of its personal appeal. Here, then, we have another instance of an art problem where a standard is not only valuable, but is actually used in our judgments. Now this standard must be our feeling of what art and beauty truly are, for how could I otherwise conclude that what pleases me is not necessarily real art? To examine this feeling and make it articulate would give us a definition of beauty and art.

Another perennial and troublesome problem in art is the relationship existing between *art* and *morality*. There is the cult of "art for art's sake," implying that art is its own justification, and the dogma of "art for man's sake," that the value of art is its moral influence. And again both cult and dogma appear to be right and also wrong. For it can not be said that the sole or even secondary objective of the creator of an art work is to teach or preach. Nor is a product an art work simply because a moral can be derived from it, or because its intention is to point a moral. Yet a preachment may be

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an art work, but it is not an art work just because it is a good preachment. Its value as a preachment appears to be apart from its value as beauty. On the other hand, any art product that does evoke the experience of beauty, is moral, in that its effect is positive, wholesome, good. Such an effect can not possibly be evil. Once again we have a case of two standards, since what we judge to be moral we do not also judge to be beautiful, and we prize beauty not for its morality, but for what it is as beauty. What is that standard for beauty? And would not the quibbling about art and morality die a natural and quiet death if this standard that we unconsciously use were brought to the surface and applied to this problem?

### 3

#### WHAT ÆSTHETICS IS

Let us now summarize our findings and see what æsthetics is.

We have found that a definition of beauty and art is not only possible, but also valuable. It is possible because the æsthetician draws a clear distinction between the experience of beauty and the object of beauty. Æsthetics does not pretend to give a definition of an object of beauty, which would imply that any object that would comply with the specifications of the definition would be beautiful to any person coming in contact with it. But it does seek a definition of the art work as a product of a creative mind. Every product of man has a cause, something that instigated it, and involves a process in its making. We can therefore ask of any art work what it is that started it, what processes were involved in its production, and how it came about being what it is. Professor John L. Lowes has given us an excellent example of the value of such an investigation in his study of the origin and growth of two poems of Coleridge. And we can do the same for art as a whole. We can ask what is the art impulse, the creative urge, what are the steps in the creative process, and from the data we can formulate a statement regarding the nature of

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art in general. Such a statement regarding art will give us a clue for a definition of the experience of beauty. And such a definition is valuable and desirable because it makes us more intelligent about the world of art and the artist, although it may not bring us any closer to an appreciation of a specific art work. To be intelligent about science, philosophy, or religion does not mean that we will be scientists, philosophers, or become religious. An intelligent conception of the nature of science and scientific method will not necessarily lead to an understanding or appreciation of the theory of relativity or the electron theory. But it will lead to a respect for science, the scientist, and scientific ideas. And a definition of beauty and art will do the same for art, the artist, and art problems. For without understanding we gibber, confuse counsel with words without knowledge, since our words are but sound and fury signifying nothing.

### 4

#### THE MATERIAL FOR A DEFINITION

A definition is a summary statement of conclusions based upon an examination of all available reliable data in some field of investigation. The examination of the data must be scientific, that is, disinterested, and the data must be ample and pertinent, if the definition is to have any validity. Our next step, therefore, must be to make a survey of the material, the data, that we might use as a basis for our examination of the nature of art and beauty, and the relative values of the material for this purpose.

The literature on art is varied and manifold. But all of it may be grouped under the following heads: *Technological*, *artistic*, *socio-historical*, *literary*, *philosophical*, and *psychological*. Each of these looks upon the art work from a somewhat different angle, the *technological* dealing with the general laws of artistic structure, the grammar of art, the *artistic* with the formal analysis of a specific art work, the *socio-historical* with the influence of social conditions and historical epochs upon

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the art produced during a given period; the *literary* with the comments of poets, novelists, dramatists on their respective arts, the *philosophical* with speculations on the place and function of art in life, the *psychological* with analysis of and experiments on the nature of the æsthetic experience.

We wish to examine this literature to see what data it promises to yield us for our purpose.

*Technological.* Technology is concerned with the artisanship of the creative activity. It takes for granted the creative impulse, and examines the tools and materials of art in order to deduce the general laws of artistic structure. Books on harmony and composition in music, on color theory and design in painting, on versification in poetry, on the technique of the novel and drama, are examples of the technological approach to art. A familiarity with these laws and skill in their application will produce the craftsman, but not the artist. A musical composition constructed in strict accordance with the laws of harmony and composition and nothing else, will yield a product that is technically correct, but artistically, musically, insignificant. The reason is that artistry is more than craftsmanship. It includes craftsmanship, but it is more than craftsmanship. That is the meaning of the principle that all great art is artless, namely, that the craftsmanship is so perfect that it does not obtrude itself upon the attention, but is a perfect medium for what it conveys. The objective of the artist is not so much to produce a perfect product technically, structurally, as to give perfect expression, adequate embodiment, to some significant personal experience. To accomplish this objective he must be a master of his tools and materials, but his mastery is ever a means to an end, but not an end. All this becomes quite apparent when we consider the fact that one often encounters a product in art which is flawless in structure but insignificant, ineffective artistically. The product arouses admiration, but not appreciation. A number of artists may paint a landscape in accordance with the laws of painting, and what they produce will be correct technically, but worthless artistically. They produced something that is perfect in

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letter but lacking in spirit. Now it is the spirit of art that we are seeking rather than its letter, and hence, the technological approach to art is quite inadequate for our purpose.

*Artistic.* "There is nothing more disheartening to man," wrote Stevenson, "than to be shown the springs and mechanisms of any art. All our arts and occupations lie wholly on the surface; it is on the surface that we perceive their beauty, fitness and significance; and to pry below is to be appalled by their emptiness and shocked by the coarseness of the springs and pulleys."

The springs and pulleys of an art work are disheartening and appalling only to the layman, as would be an outlay of the parts of the human body. To the anatomist and physiologist these parts are anything but empty and coarse, and far from causing a shock, are viewed with admiration and enthusiasm. The reason is that the layman sees nothing but wreckage, while the professional man is aware of the contribution of each item to the whole of which it forms a part. Viewed in the light of the whole, the part is as significant as is the whole, being a symbol of the whole. Without an idea of the whole, the parts are just so much rubbish, empty and meaningless, and therefore appalling.

Now for the artist, being a creative worker, imbued with the spirit of the whole, the letter of the springs and pulleys is of vast significance. His dissection of the whole into its parts is inspired and guided by his love of the whole, and he who loves seeks also to understand. But without the love of the whole, the analysis of it into its constituent parts is motiveless, therefore meaningless, and therefore also without understanding. It is full of toil and trouble, but it signifies nothing.

What the analytical approach to an art work gives us then is the ways and means, but not the end, the goal, that is to be attained, and which instigated the ways and means and gives them their warmth and vitality. Means arise out of ends to be achieved, and can be evaluated and appreciated only in the light of the ends. "Art," said John Stuart Mill, "proposes ✓ to itself an end, and looks out for means to effect it."

Now the task of æsthetics is to inquire into the ends of art.

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The definition of art and beauty that it seeks is in terms of artistic impulse and objective. It is not a description of *how* the artist works that gives an insight into the nature of his activity, but an account of *why* he works, what the driving force of his activity is, and the objective that the activity seeks to attain. Artistic analyses of *how* only arouse the queries *why* and *what*, forcing the investigator to seek data for an answer wherever these may be found.

*Socio-historical.* When the investigator turns to the socio-historical material and evaluates it he again finds little of value for his purpose. In spite of the apparent fact that art works may be utilized as historical and sociological records, he finds himself in agreement with Algernon Clarke Swinburne that "the question whether past or present afford the highest matter for high poetry and offer the noblest reward to the noble workman . . . is really less debatable on any rational ground than the question of the end and aim of art. . . . Art knows nothing of time; for her there is but one tense, and all ages in her sight are alike present; there is nothing old in her sight, and nothing new . . . (S)he cannot be vulgarized by the touch of the present or destroyed by the contact of the past. . . . No form is obsolete, no subject out of date, if the right man be there to rehandle it."

{ Any artistic product of the past that has value for us today as an art work does not owe that æsthetic value to its mere subject-matter as a record of an event or a condition of the times, no matter how skillfully done. The subject-matter is certainly not irrelevant, but neither is it paramount. It is but the raw material that the creative mind utilizes for its creative purposes. Neither time, nor place, nor subject-matter make the artist. Time and place and available material influence him and his work, but they do not determine his significance as an artist nor the value of his output as art works. An Ibsen or Shakespeare living today would produce dramatic literature of the same quality he produced in his day, although the material would be different. The placing of an art work historically or sociologically neither adds nor

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detracts anything from its status as an art work. Art is neither dependent nor independent of time and place, because it is neither dependent nor independent of subject-matter. It needs subject-matter, and so is dependent on time and place. But since mere subject-matter is not art, only its raw stuff, it is also independent of time and place, for whatever the raw stuff, it will be turned into artistic gold by genius, while in the hands of mediocrity it will remain but artistic dross. Hence the sociological and historical materials of art offer little of direct value for the purpose of the æsthetician.

*Literary, Philosophical, Psychological.* The literary, philosophical, and psychological material on art we may consider together, for they are mutually inclusive, since the literary man often philosophizes and psychologizes about art and beauty, while the most significant philosophical and psychological writings, as for instance those of Plato, Schopenhauer, or Santayana, who have written extensively on art, are not only philosophy or psychology, but literature. Each of these views art and beauty from a somewhat different angle, but all are equally significant, since their interest is not in technique or formal analysis, but in the nature and function of art as a whole. Thus, the philosopher, whose aim is to obtain a unified, integrated view of the world, comes upon art and defines it in the course of his attempt to ascertain the particular living need that gives rise to it. Consequently a patient search through the writings of the philosophers from Plato to Croce gives us many a valuable clue to the secret of the æsthetic realm. The contradictions of the philosophers that "stupify" their critics are due to a superficial reading or to second-hand accounts of their writings and not to the stupidity of the philosophers. For if mental giants like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, are stupid, then their stupidity is the sole wisdom that we possess about the prime human values of the good, the true, and the beautiful. It were well that we examined the beam in our own eyes before we point our fingers in derision at the motes in the eyes of philosophers. The philosopher is an earnest seeker



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for wisdom on the basis of the facts supplied him by the sciences of his day, and his conclusions are not only worthy of our respect, but it is our wisdom to study them earnestly and seriously. And the æsthetic theories of the philosophers, whether consistent or inconsistent with each other, possess the one supreme virtue of being the earnest search of a great mind for the truth that is in him, a virtue that the detractors of the philosophers might do well to cultivate and emulate.

Psychology is the scientific study of the interests, motives, and activities of living organisms. Its objective is that of any other science, namely, to discover by experiment and observation the laws of sequence of events and thereby obtain control over them. To effect this science asks of any phenomenon *what* is happening, *how* it is happening, and *when* it is happening. These questions apply to an organism as they do to a mechanism, since the laws of cause and effect operate for living bodies as they do for the non-living, only that causes and effects are more complex and varied for the former than the latter. This only means, however, a difference in degree, not in kind, in that the scientific investigation of animate matter presents difficulties not encountered in the study of inanimate substances.

4 To obtain information on the *what*, *how*, and *when* of phenomena calls for analysis, the breaking up of the whole into its constituent parts. Consequently, when psychology turns to the study of the phenomena of human nature, analyzes it into its ingredients, it encounters among the other elements of human interest and activity the experience of beauty and its expression in art works. Hence the question: What is the nature of this experience and this expression, and in what way do they differ from other interests and activities such as the good, the true, and the useful. So psychology proceeds to draw distinctions by analyzing out the features that are unique to beauty. In doing so, psychology begins where philosophy leaves off. Philosophy inquires into the place of beauty and art in life, while psychology examines the nature of the experience of beauty and the creative activity. But the two are supplementary. For in dealing with the function of

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the experience philosophy must also consider its nature, while the psychological analysis of the experience also suggests its function. In fact, a good many philosophical theories of beauty deal as much with its nature as with its function, while psychological writings on æsthetics more often than not discuss its function in connection with its analysis. Nevertheless there is a difference, in that psychology, in so far as possible, relies upon data experimentally obtained, while the philosopher views beauty in a somewhat interested manner as a part of his philosophical system.

Since psychology and philosophy concern themselves so intimately with art and beauty, examining both at their very well-head, they supply an important source from which we can draw reliable data for a science of æsthetics. But they are not the principal source. For that we must go to those who know, because they do, the artists themselves. When the artist, whether as poet, novelist, dramatist, or true critic, expresses himself on art, his word must be taken as coming from the court of last resort. He speaks by the authority of the living spirit of personal experience, not as the scribe of theory, dogma, or creed, by the dead letter of the law. Even when the artist insists that he does not know, he gives away many a secret in his very denial. But more often than not, the great artists of the ages have expressed themselves directly or indirectly on their work. The poetry of Keats is, in large measure, an examination of the nature of poetry in particular and art and beauty in general. Many of Browning's greatest poems, like *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Pippa Passes*, *Sordello*, *Toccata of Galuppi*, *Abt Vogler*, are expositions of the passions and aims of painter, poet, and musician. Here then we have first-hand material which, together with the speculations of the philosophers and the analyses of the psychologists, we can utilize as data from which to draw fairly reliable conclusions of the nature of art and beauty. In our study we shall rely primarily on the original source material of the creative minds, using the findings of philosophy and psychology as corroborative evidence.

## PART I

### ART AND THE ARTIST

*. . . human nature cannot know the mystery of an art without experience.—Plato*

*Genius is to æsthetics what the ego is to philosophy, the only supreme and absolute rule.—Schelling*





## CHAPTER II

### THE ART WORK

How shall we begin our search? How can we best utilize our data? The answer is that, if we expect our conclusions to have any validity, our procedure must be as closely scientific as we can possibly make it. Now the word scientific sounds harsh and grating when used outside the sphere of the so-called material sciences. In the realm of art or religion or even ethics and morality it seems almost blasphemous. This attitude is due primarily to the unfortunate fact that traditionally we have steeped these human values in a pool of soft sentimentalism and emotionalisms from which they have not been completely rescued even in this scientific age. But the progress of the physical sciences for the last century and a half should teach us an object lesson. So soon as the inquiry into material phenomena became truly scientific, instead of being viewed supernaturally, we began to gain a control over our physical environment to an extent that has proved a permanent blessing to mankind. Today our physical household is in fairly good order, with a good promise of even better things to come in the near future. But we are still entertaining the delusion that the sole approach to human values is emotion and sentiment, with their inevitable bickerings, quarrels, and confusion. Yet art, morality, and religion are phenomena, experiences, facts, not essentially unlike those that reign in the objective world. There are æsthetic, moral, and religious facts as there are physical and chemical facts. And they can be investigated by scientific procedure. There is no pathway to system, order, and control excepting that of knowledge. And knowledge is impossible without scientific method. We can not arrive at truth by talk, no matter how heated, but by a calm, dispassionate, disinterested search for basic facts. This is all that is meant by scientific method, and no more. The scientist questions some observable

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phenomenon until it has told him *what* it is in its substance, as different from other phenomena, *how* it comes to be what it is, that is, what processes operate in it, and *when* it gets to be what it is, or the conditions that bring it about. This method can be readily applied to art. An art work is the tangible, observable manifestation of an experience. The experience is the cause of which the art work is the effect, and between the two there is a process, an activity. The art work is our laboratory subject, and we can inquire of it to tell us what sort of phenomenon it is, what processes are involved in its creation, and what impulse brought it into existence. And such will be our procedure. We shall first consider the *what* of the art work, namely, its general nature, next, its *how*, the processes involved in its creation, and when we have the answers to the *what* and *how*, we shall turn to an examination of the *when*, or the nature of the impulse or drive that brings it about.

### 1

#### THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE ART WORK

We begin our search with several definitions of an art work given by some creative workers, from which we may deduce a plausible hypothesis as to its general nature, and which we shall then examine in the light of the data from literary, psychological, and philosophical sources.

"Art is that beauty which the imagination has created, and which wakes in the observer an emotion of pleasure similar to that of the artist." (Mrs. John Sloan)

"Art may be almost any form of beauty, created or expressed in such form that it may be enjoyed and which thereby makes living a more delightful experience." (Don Dickerman)

"This is all I know of art—unhappy men of other days distilled the poison of the heart and sealed it in a perfect phrase." (Floyd Dell)

"It certainly is not mere craftsmanship. More important is the mystical power of feeling and of communicating that feeling to others." (Art Young)

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"Art is the perfection of expression." (Phelps Phelps)

"Art is yearning done in matter." (L. C. M. Reed)

"Art is the material expression of unconscious ideas and emotions, passed through consciousness and handed on as a torch to others." (Silas Bent)

"Art is the outpouring of the creative flood of life in terms of a personality." (Beth Benton Sutherland)

"Art is essence as distinguished from the husk." (Don Corley)

↗ "Art is man's attempt to conquer nature, either by improving upon her or by condemning her." (Rex Stout)

"The most beautiful presentation of whatever is." (Robert C. Beadle)

All these definitions are vague, and to the layman quite meaningless. The first definition states one unknown in terms of another, in saying that art is beauty—for what is beauty? The second speaks of the creative urge—but what is that? The third refers to interpretation—but what is the nature of the interpretation and why? The last mentions beautiful presentation—but what is beautiful presentation? Apparently these definitions do no more than raise questions. They are principally definitions that need defining. But they are nevertheless valuable, in that we can glean from each and every one of them several suggestive ideas. All of them either state directly or imply that art is *expression*. They also state or imply that the expression is not any expression, but something that partakes of the nature of *perfection*. And then, what is most important, they state or imply that the something that is expressed perfectly is not merely *commonplace* ordinary experience, but something unique, and of unusual significance and vitality, which was evolved from common experience. The definitions yield us therefore the following hypothesis about the art work:

*A product is not an art work just because it is a skillful, perfect reproduction of something that already exists, nor is it an art work merely because it has no connection with, or relationship to anything which already exists. The art work is something evolved*

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*from ordinary experience and given perfect form, and not the mere perfect literal transcription of ordinary experience, no matter how interesting or exciting.*

Let us put this hypothesis to the test of experience.

The first thought that comes to mind when we question an art work is that we are never much concerned with its mere factual material. We never ask whether the incidents, characters, and events in a novel or drama did or did not occur, nor whether the person in a portrait ever did or did not exist. It is a matter of indifference to us, æsthetically, as to whether Hamlet was an actual person who was born at this or that time, who lived in this or that place, or whether the incidents of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Othello* are historically true. If we were to read two biographies of Julius Cæsar that were different in some details, we would feel that there was something wrong. But two dramas on Julius Cæsar that differed completely from each other would not trouble us in the least, provided both were good dramas. One drama might picture him as a martyr, the other as a tyrant who deserved his fate, yet, as drama, one could be as significant as the other, despite the differences in historical, chronological, or biographical details. Historical novels, like Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* or Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, or historical dramas like those of Shakespeare, do not owe their artistic quality to their being historical, while the artistic quality of histories like Carlyle's *French Revolution*, or Green's *Short History of the English People*, or Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is not due to their being history. We might even go farther and say that if a novel like Dickens' *Oliver Twist* or a social play like Ibsen's *Doll's House* remains an art work today, it is not because of its subject-matter, but in spite of it, for the conditions pictured in each of them are no longer true. If art consisted in no more than skillful reproduction of fact we would have to admit into the realm everything that we now exclude, like books on science, history, psychology, and exclude everything that we now accept as real art.

To the above we may add the further apparent fact that to



reduce a play, novel, or poem to its mere subject-matter, namely, the plot of the play, the story of the novel, the idea of the poem, destroys its very substance as art, irrespective of how skillful and interesting the narrative of this subject-matter may be. Any one familiar with Shakespeare revolts at Lamb's stories of the plays, well told as they are. On the other hand, all subject-matter, all factual material, has within it the germ, the possibility of art, for there is hardly a human interest or activity, or an aspect of nature, that has not been used by some creator as a basis for drama, novel, story, poem, essay, painting, or sculpture.

Thus we find that fact, as such, is not art. Nevertheless, if the factual material of an artistic product seems to us to be distorted, fantastic, freakish, untrue, we do not accept it as art. Unless there is natural, factual truth, there is no artistic, æsthetic truth. For instance, there is a significance, a truth, a vitality, a livingness, in the characters of Dreiser's novels in comparison with which those of Sinclair Lewis are lifeless puppets. Lewis' characters give the impression of having been manufactured to suit some arbitrary purpose of their maker. They are means to fit an end, as expressions of the prejudices of Mr. Lewis. He does not paint life; he approves and disapproves of particular individuals, social classes, or professions. He is a master technician, but he exaggerates, distorts. His characters are either all virtue or all vice, all wisdom or all ignorance, and in either case, false, untrue to life. There is no Elmer Gantry in life, nor a Dods-worth, nor an Arrowsmith. We do not know of human beings who are either all strength or all weakness. We know them only as both strong and weak, some of them more one than the other. The only all-perfect or all-imperfect individuals are those deluded, and we usually put such in asylums. Mr. Lewis' novels are the social tracts of a strongly prejudiced master craftsman. They are interesting, exciting, entertaining, but when we have read them once we are through with them. They are excellent showmanship, but not art. We exhaust them at one reading. They have no depth which invites repeated

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probing. They have no universality, because they do not touch those aspects of life that are independent of the accidents of time and place. In Dreiser we touch the undercurrents of life, life in its universal truth. His characters are symbols of human existence in its totality, its hopes, desires, urges, aspirations, groping in the dark, but striving for light. They are real, we know them, we touch elbows with them daily, they are ourselves. We differ from them on the surface, but we are they and they are we at the core of being. Lewis' characters we judge. We approve or disapprove of them. We moralize about them. They arouse indignation or praise. Our response to them is not æsthetic, but moralistic, ethical. Those of Dreiser we accept as revelations of ourselves; we accept them as we accept life, as we accept our own existence. We know we are not Elmer Gantrys or Dodsworths. We may have a touch of them, but we are not they. But all of us are at one and the same time all the characters of the *The Genius*, *An American Tragedy*, *Sister Carrie*, *The Plutocrat*, and *Jennie Gerhardt*. We are not only one of them, but all of them. At best, Elmer Gantry arouses a temporary and local issue, or he amuses or riles us, after which we dismiss him. But Eugene Witla is ever with us, and we are ever with him.

### 2

#### ART AND FACT

But if art is neither mere fact nor sheer fantasy, what is it? What else is left? Every art work gives us a peculiar experience, an experience that we can get from no other source. Our ordinary responses to stimuli we readily classify into real and unreal, true or false, tangible or intangible, our criterion being the objectivity of the stimulus. An image of a table is unreal in comparison with the table itself. The unreal is the subjective, the real is the objective. But in an art work this condition seems to be reversed. The unreal not only appears to be the real, but even more real than the objective fact. A character in a novel or play, if he interests us at all, is more

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real, true, living, to us, at the time than any actual person we have ever encountered, although we know that he is only an idea, a fiction, a mental construction of the author, and has never really existed as flesh and blood. During the time that we are immersed in that fictitious character, it is the people we know exist as actualities that appear to us as illusory, as unreal, while the fictitious one is the truly, the really real. A person of whom we read in a newspaper we know to be real, that he exists somewhere, yet he is not as real as the person in the novel or play. By the objective test he is unreal; by the subjective test, he is intrinsically real. The test of the art reality, then, seems to be the reverse of that of daily, ordinary experience. Yet the art reality is not divorced from the ordinary reality, but seems to grow out of it, for we feel that the truth of the fictitious character holds for every actual person we know. It is in all of us. But it is not apparent, manifest, while here in the novel or drama it is the very thing, clear, precise, tangible, apparent, and manifest.} Thus the truth of history or science, capable of objective verification, is the untruth of art, while the truth of art, incapable of objective verification, is the untruth of science or history, and yet the truth of art is inherent in the truth of science or history. The fiction dwells in fact, lies hidden, potential in it, and is brought forth, made actual in the art work.

Here then we have the proof of our hypothesis that art is not mere literal transcription of fact, nor mere reversal of fact. We may therefore define an art work in a preliminary manner as *fact transformed by fiction*. If we give the name of *realism* to fact, to that which is real externally, and *reality* to fiction, to that which is true internally, our definition reads as follows: *An art work is reality evolved out of and expressed through realism, thus transforming realism into reality.*

This definition does no more than establish a relationship between art and life, telling us that art begins where life ends, that art lifts life into a new level of being, of existence, a sort of revaluation of values, that it is a creation, not an imitation. But in telling us this much it tells us a great deal,

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in that it enables us to deduce some general characteristics of the art work and of the creator, from which we may begin an inquiry into its specific nature.

To get at these general characteristics let us supplement and fortify our definition by a quotation for a creative mind:

All art consists of the stuff of experience. The question is: Into what, without being contorted, has that stuff been transformed or transmuted? Not changed! Character, incident, shape, color, landscape—all may be strictly those of reality, and indeed the artist need have had little consciousness but that of precisely rendering reality. But if he is an artist his inner feeling of what constitutes precision will raise his *mimesis*, his imitation of life into a region above life. His product will be, in a definite sense, more like life than life itself—this is neither jest nor paradox—in that it will shape completely where life's hand slipped and bring out hidden meanings missed by the hot hour of experience and add to incident and character the fruit of meditation and later insight. The artistic process does more: it conceives this clarified and completed substance in terms of form—form which is, in this sense next to impossible to define, for it is an unanalyzable building of structure toward an identity of significance and rhythm, of meaning and music. . . . The artist works at this form; this and this alone is the substance of his labor. He regards the stuff of experience which he is using, though it was once the beating of his very heart, the rending of his very nerves, with cold objectivity and uses it calmly to build the structure of form that is some day, he hopes, to stand against the sky. . . . The passion that he feels during the creative process is not the echo or the shadow of the passions that he uses in his work: as passions they are dead to him. What shakes him now is the passion of his form, the tremor of eternity. Upon him blows a cold, yet ardent wind from other spheres. Hence, though not hence only, the mean absurdity of the strutting manikins out in the world of the perishable who say to the artist: You have used me as material: that is I and I will not have it. Is it indeed "you?" Then it is a "you" to which you have no right, which you could never have seen or created, a transcendent "you," a "you" wrought into an eternal substance unimaginable to the "you" that, in humble fact, you are. . . .<sup>1</sup>

If we examine the quotation in the light of our definition a number of points emerge, an examination of which will bring us more closely to the substance of the art work.

What do we find in this pronouncement?

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Lewisohn, *Mid-Channel*, Harpers, pp. 161–162.

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It tells us, in the first place, that all art consists of the stuff of experience, but is more than that stuff. But what is the stuff of experience? Of what does it consist? What is a true experience, under ordinary, everyday, normal circumstances?

There are at least four criteria for the truth of ordinary experience. Ordinarily an experience is true, real, if it is common, if all normally constituted persons give similar reports of it. It is apparent, obvious, requiring no more for its apprehension and comprehension than the mere utterance of it to be accepted. For all normal persons grass is green, the sky is blue, two and two make four. Ordinarily an experience is true, real, if the mental occurrence can be referred to some physical, objective phenomenon as its cause. The sight of a tree is real when the cause of the vision can be verified by other sense organs as being due to an objective stimulus. Ordinarily that is true, real, which works, which can be tried and found not wanting; or which is useful, in that it furthers and satisfies some commonly recognized need like hunger, shelter, sex, play, power, control. Ordinarily an experience is real if it involves mental or physical effort, as some problem to be solved or some obstruction to be overcome.

Such is ordinary experience, which constitutes the stuff of art, but which the above pronouncement, as well as our preliminary definition, tell us is not art, no matter how well imitated by artistic means. It becomes art only when it is transformed, transmuted into something else, a something above life, and yet more like life than life itself. This something does not consist of a *change* of the stuff, but of its *transformation* into something that is different from it in appearance and significance. In a transformation the presence of that which has been transformed is felt in the new product. There is a consciousness that something new has been evolved from something old, that the old has been transcended, raised to a new level, that something that existed in the old potentially, innerly, has been made manifest, brought forth, built out into an actual. There is a unique power of mind, possessed by a few rare individuals, of penetrating beyond the

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surface of experience to the presence of something that is neither apparent to sense nor can be deduced by reason alone, and which is not consciously, deliberately sought after, but appears to come rather as a sudden revelation. The painter does not arbitrarily set out to find something in a human face or in a bit of nature to paint. What he is painting is not the result of cold calculated premeditation. Were he to do this he would produce something mechanical, arbitrary. He is not even aware that what he is painting is in any manner different from what he sees. But by the very virtue of his being an artist, possessing a certain unique mentality, he sees beyond the powers of the eye, so that what he puts on canvas is at once like and also unlike that which is present objectively. Hence the uniqueness of what he produces. His product is real, yet also unreal. It is like, yet also unlike that which is given in visual experience. He therefore does not imitate, he creates. A creation is not a delusion, a deception, but a revelation, an unfolding. That which is revealed, unfolded, has its existence in dormant form in that from which it is revealed, and through which it is revealed. An art work does not delude or deceive. It unveils. The poet, wrote Shelley, "strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its form."

Our poesy is as a gem, which oozes  
From whence 'tis nourished; the fire  
Shows not till it is struck; lo the flint over gentle flame  
Provokes itself and like the current flies  
Each bound it chafes.

This is the mind of the creative artist. The world is its flint, which it strikes for the fire within it. It is the mind that feels, in the words of Whitman, that

Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed of perfection.

"The poet," writes Edwin Markham, "comes to behold and to express the hidden loveliness of the world, to point out the

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ideal that is ever seeking to push through the husk of things and to reveal the inner spiritual reality. So all of life is material for his seeing eye and his thinking heart, and he makes the wonderful familiar and makes the familiar wonderful."

What else does the pronouncement tell us?

It tells us further that this unique experience of the creative mind, this something that is life, yet more than life itself, leads to a fully conscious, rational activity, to labor, in the course of which the experience is given bodily form, is materially incarnated, that there is a stage at which the artist regards the stuff of experience "with cold objectivity and uses it calmly to build the structure of form that is some day, he hopes, to stand against the sky." But what is it that stands against the sky, what is the significance of the "structure of form"? It is that the structure is a carefully, laboriously worked out record, adequate to the point of perfection, of the unique creative experience. The creative experience is the stimulus for the form giving. The passion of the experience gives rise to the passion of work, but a passion that is rationally guided, that selects, discriminates between possible means for the accomplishment of an urgent end. Thus cold reason is warmed by the passion of creative experience. Herein lies the expressive element of art. Art, it is true, is expression. ✓ But expression of *what* and *how*? All life is expression. We express ourselves in all we do. But all expression is not art, ✓ beauty. Most of it is anything but that. Expression becomes art only when it is the expression of a unique experience in a unique manner, a creative experience creatively uttered. Art is not mere passion. It is not mere labor. It is not mere inspiration. It is passionate labor, inspired by, and therefore guided by a passionate experience, so that the product of the labor becomes a permanent monument of the experience.

What, now, is an art work, in general? *An art work is the expression of a unique experience by a unique mind, the expression resulting in a product which is a perfect record of the experience.*

But what is the nature of the unique experience and the

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unique mind? How does the experience come into being, wherein lies its uniqueness and its significance, what is the nature of the expressive activity, and in what manner does the creative mind differ from other minds? It is the answers to these crucial questions that will reveal to us the substance of art and beauty.





### CHAPTER III

#### THE ART WORK IN THE MAKING

The art work, we have seen, begins with the old, the familiar, the commonplace, and culminates in the presentation of the new, the unique, the rare. In order to see the creative product, therefore, in its full, complete significance, we should begin the examination of how it comes into existence with a study of the nature of the old, how this arises, what purpose it serves, and in what way it differs from the new that is evolved out of it.

##### 1

#### THE NATURE OF THE OLD

An organism lives by and through the environment in which it dwells. Biologically, life means an adjustment between organism and environment. Any living body that is incapable for whatever reason to make such an adjustment can not survive. Now some organisms come into the world natively supplied with the means of adjustment. The higher organisms, man in particular, possess no such native equipment. They come into the world helpless, and must gradually acquire the ability to meet a situation in an adequate, effective manner. This process of acquiring ability to meet the physical world we call learning, and its results constitute what is commonly termed knowledge. We know a situation when, as a result of learning, we can meet it directly and effectively, that is, without delay and without fumbling, whenever it presents itself before us. In this learning process that equips us for the contingencies of existence there are three steps, namely, sensation, perception, and recall.

Sensation supplies us with the material out of which knowledge is built up. A sensation is a direct, immediate contact of mind with matter. Sensations constitute the elementary mental processes initiated in the brain by any sense organ being stimu-

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lated by some force either inside or outside the body. Initially then, we know the world as well as our own bodies only as sensations. So soon as the infant's sense organs begin to function it has sensations.

Now whereas sensations are the raw stuff of knowledge, they do not constitute knowledge. With sensations alone no adequate adjustment would be possible. If, by some mischance, any one of us were to lose everything we ever learned, but with the sense organs still functioning, we would be reduced to helplessness. The world about us would become what William James called a "buzzing confusion." We would hear, see, taste, touch, smell, etc., but we would not know what we heard, tasted, saw, touched, smelled. And without such knowledge we could do nothing definite or specific. Here perception comes in. In the process of perception the vague sensations become definite ideas or percepts. They assume form and content or *meaning*. By form is meant that a number of sensations become integrated into some one object differing from another integration of sensations into another object. Thus out of the chaos of sensation there gradually develops, as a result of experience, of learning, a systematic, orderly world of objects and happenings. As the world is assuming order it is also becoming clothed with meaning, that is, with definite behavior responses. The meaning of a situation is always the behavior it evokes. The behavior constitutes the knowledge of the situation. So long as the behavior is haphazard, hit or miss, the situation is unknown. Behavior is the sole indication of the presence or absence of knowledge, as well as the degree of its presence or absence. We know because we can do, and only when we can do, and the degree to which we can do. Language is no more than substitute behavior. The verbal statement "I can swim" is but a report of the act of swimming, and has no meaning apart from that act. Words are but records of behavior experiences. Without such behavior experiences they are meaningless.

Meaning is made possible by the bodily property of *retention*, which results in the mental power of *recognition*. All

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living bodies, but particularly those possessing a highly developed nervous system, retain the results of past occurrences. Any occurrence in the nervous system, any neural process, leaves a trace of itself behind, a sort of readiness for another process of the same or similar nature. The exact nature of this trace we do not know. It is most probable that the whole complex of neural organization or pattern is in some way modified, similar, perhaps, to the modification that occurs in a chemical substance on the introduction into it of an additional ingredient. But, whatever the nature of the effect, retention means greater readiness for re-excitation along a similar line.

The mental consequent of retention is recognition, its conscious counterpart. Recognition is made possible by retention, and varies with it in degree. Faint retention means vague recognition, a mere cloudy feeling that what is happening now has happened before. Such hazy feeling is not knowledge in the true sense, for behavior is vacillating, uncertain. Recognition is knowledge only when it attains the vividness and clarity of specific, definite, certain behavior.

But knowledge is not complete even with fully conscious perception. Perception is dependent upon the physical presence of the situation. With perception alone mind remains a slave of matter, in that it can operate only when the situation enables it to do so by being physically present. Mind is freed from this bondage only when it can deal with the situation in its physical absence, and be fully prepared to meet it when it makes its physical appearance. This complete emancipation of mind from matter is made possible by the mental power of *recall*, which occurs either as an image or a memory. To recall is to bring back past events, past experiences in the physical absence of the stimuli that originally caused them. This recalling may occur either as a mere *revival* of the past event or as a *recollection* of it. In revival the event is relived, re-experienced mentally, as an image, a picture, a mental copy of the situation as it occurred in the past. The past occurs as if it were the present. In recollection the present

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image is definitely referred to the past, in the full consciousness of details as to when and how it occurred. The past event does not only occur as a present event, but everything connected with it as a past event is recollected, gathered together, in the present. This is memory. Memory is thus heightened imagery, in that it is not only the bare past event that is present, but all events that have been associated with it in the past, where, when, how, and why it occurred. When knowledge has attained this stage it is full and complete, for not only can a situation be handled and dealt with at will, whether bodily present or absent, but since the image is also more plastic than the percept, the situation can be shaped and moulded at pleasure into a form that is quite different from what it is in actuality. Mind is now master of the situation, whereas in perception it was the slave.

Such is practical experience, realism, knowledge that arises out of the exigencies of life as a process of adjustment between organism and environment. This is the stuff of art, the material that art utilizes for its creative purposes. Artistic activity therefore begins where practical activity culminates. Our problem now is to examine the nature of this transforming process, how it occurs and why.

### 2

#### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

To the creative mind the creative activity does not appear so much as a process, a sequence of happenings, a growth culminating in a fruition, as a mere occurrence, a sudden appearance in the form of an illumination, or inspiration. The idea or theme to be given material form seems to spring fully mature, like Minerva from the head of Jove, while the creator is in a state of divine afflatus or fine frenzy. Yet, though this substance of the art work may come as a flash of inspiration, it must come from somewhere and in some manner. Even divine gifts are not so much donations as acquisitions, and

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the muses must be courted before they yield their favors. The human mind certainly does not work by leaps and bounds, nor does it evolve anything out of nothing. It works slowly and gradually in a sequence of steps, growing on the nourishment supplied by experience. And if the art work is built out of the stuff of experience, the building process starts somewhere in some way and proceeds systematically, though spontaneously, in a certain manner, until it reaches completion. "There is a painful pregnancy in genius," writes George Santayana, "a long incubation and waiting for the spirit, a thousand rejections and futile birthpangs, before the wonderful child appears, a gift of the gods, utterly undeserved and inexplicably perfect." In order to be able to appreciate this wondrous perfect child, to realize its true wonder and perfection, we must follow its development from its inception, through its painful pregnancy, to its birth and maturity.

But is this process subject to analysis or must it be taken for granted as a mysterious gift bestowed on the creative mind? "I have often thought," wrote Poe, "how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say, who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say; but, perhaps, the authorial vanity has had more to do with the omissions than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cocks feathers, the red paint and black

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patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrionics." <sup>1</sup>

Poe is not stating the case altogether accurately in this passage. It is not true, in the first place, that the poet "would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes" of his creative activity. The truth is that the creator does not know specifically what is happening in the process of creation, since he does not deliberately set out on the journey, with a consciously worked out plan of operation, although he does deliberately set out to state what he has found at the end of the journey of discovery. Nor is he able to retrace his steps, for they are too winding and complicated. Besides, such retracing would be wasteful, tedious for him—why should he look backward when there are such glorious prospects ahead of him? He is therefore not reluctant to tell; he either does not know or he has no time to waste in merely going over traveled ground. Even if he did make the attempt deliberately he could only tell us a pack of lies, as Poe himself does in his account of how *The Raven* was written. But we can retrace his steps for him by playing spy upon him and by taking a clue from a hint he throws out here and there in his work. He does, therefore, tell us what he is about, only indirectly so, and therefore also more truthfully, since he does so spontaneously. Keats' poems, for instance, are a treasure trove on how poems arise slowly and gradually from the pain and anguish of their makers. In the second place, if we search far enough and wide enough in the realm of literature we are invariably rewarded with more or less direct statements from creative minds about the manner in which their ideas came to them and the labor involved in giving them formal expression. From these original sources, fortified with what we know from psychological research on creative thought, we can make a fairly systematic analysis of the steps in the creative process. Here are several such original sources:

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche gives the following account of the evolution of his main work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*:

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Composition.*

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I would like to tell you the history of my *Zarathustra*. Its fundamental conception, the idea of *Eternal Recurrence*, the highest formula of affirmation that can ever be attained, belongs to August, 1881. I made a hasty note of it on a sheet of paper, with the postscript: "Six thousand feet beyond man and time." That day I was walking through the woods beside Lake Silvaplana; I halted not far from Surlei, beside a huge, towering pyramidal rock. It was there that the idea came to me. If I count back two months previous to this day, I can discover a warning sign in the form of an abrupt and profoundly decisive change in my tastes—more especially in music. Perhaps the whole of *Zarathustra* may be classified as music—I am sure that one of the conditions of its production was a renaissance in me of the art of hearing. In Recoaro, a little mountain watering-place near Vicenza, where I spent the spring of 1881, I, together with my friend and maestro Peter Gast (another who had been reborn), discovered that the phoenix bird of music hovered over us, decked in more beautiful and brilliant plumage than it had ever before exhibited. If, therefore, I reckon from that day to the sudden birth of the book, amid the most unlikely circumstances, in February, 1883,—its last part, . . . —it would appear that the period of gestation was eighteen months. The period of eighteen months might suggest, at least to Buddhists, that I am in reality a female elephant. The interval was devoted to the *Gaya Scienza*, which has a hundred indications of the approach of something unparalleled; its conclusion shows the beginning of *Zarathustra*, since it presents *Zarathustra's* fundamental thought in the last aphorism but one of the fourth book. To this interval also belongs that *Hymn to Life* (for a mixed choir and orchestra), the score of which was published in Leipzig two years ago by E. W. Fritsch.<sup>1</sup>

The German dramatist Grillparzer reports this incident of his creative life:

At this time I planned to take advantage of a vacation to finish my play, *The Golden Fleece*, work on which was interrupted by my Italian journey. But a tragic event intervened. My mother's death, the overwhelming impressions of the Italian journey, my sickness in Italy, the distractions of the return home, had effaced all preparation for the work I planned. I had forgotten everything. Above all, the point of view, but also the details, were cast into darkness, so that I could never decide to put anything on paper. While I was attempting vainly to delve into my memory, something wonderful occurred. I used to play with my mother the compositions of great masters arranged for the piano for four hands. While playing the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, I thought continually about my *Golden*

<sup>1</sup> Modern Library edition, pp. 94-96.

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*Fleece*, and the embryonic ideas fused with the tones into a unified whole. This fact I had also forgotten or never thought of seeking help thereby. I had made the acquaintance of Karoline Pickler, an authoress. Her daughter was a pianist and at times we would play the piano after dinner. Then it happened that when we came to the symphonies that I had played with mother all my former ideas came back to me. I knew once more what I needed,—and although the same standpoint could not be regained, my purpose and the tendency of the entire play became clarified. I set to work, finished the *Argonauts* and began *Medea*.

From poets we have numerous accounts of how poems are born. Thus John Gould Fletcher tells us that his own method of writing poetry is as follows:

Something which I have seen, heard, or experienced in life affects me very strongly. I brood upon it, largely unconsciously, until suddenly, for no apparent reason, a line or a group of lines form themselves in my brain, in some way connected with the subject on which I have been thinking. These lines are not necessarily the opening lines of the poem; they may be its refrain, or leading idea, but when they have established themselves in memory for the time being, other lines are added to them. In this way I have often composed as many as a dozen lines of poetry before putting pen to paper. When I finally sit down to the actual task of composition, I generally (except in the case of a very long poem, of which the process of incubation has gone on for a considerable time) write out the whole poem in a single draft and at a single sitting, my aim being to preserve my original subconscious impulse as long as possible.

This original draft may later be amplified or corrected, but never entirely rewritten. During the first heat of composition, I find that I am usually so entirely absorbed in the subject as to be oblivious of the flight of time, and sometimes I am so completely unaware of what it is that I am putting on paper, that it is only at a later reading that I recognize its value. This seems to be a fairly common experience with most poets; and I should say that the great point about the first draft of any poem is to be able to stop before exhaustion has set in, and also to be able to look upon it later with a detached and refreshed mind. Sometimes the subconscious discovery I have made in writing a poem urges me to compose a number of others on similar or related lines. In this way I wrote my color-symphonies, and a great many poems contained in *The Tree of Life*.

Frequently I have noticed that it is not a single impulse that has produced in me a poem, but the fusion of several. Thus, for example, my poem on *Lincoln* came into being, first, because I had been strongly



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moved by reading Herndon's *Life*; second, because I had but recently spent a summer in the pine woods of Michigan, and had been powerfully affected by the backwoods atmosphere in which Lincoln had grown to manhood; third, because of the troubled political situation in America, in the spring of 1916, when the poem was actually composed. Incidentally, I may also remark that this poem was written in a single afternoon, but that my mind had in some way been preparing for it for nearly a year before. And in much the same way I might analyze many of my longer and better-known poems.<sup>1</sup>

In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* Shakespeare gives us a most striking comment on the workings of the imagination:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

One of the most striking of all indirect lights on the creative process is given in verse form by Amy Lowell. Dr. W. V. Bingham gives the following account of the occasion of this poem:

One day in July, 1924, we had been dining with Amy Lowell at her home in Brookline. After an evening of brilliant talk about the mental processes of poetic invention and particularly about the way in which some of her own poems had come to birth, we tried to per-

<sup>1</sup> "Thoughts on the Making of Poetry." From *The Way of the Makers*, by Marguerite Wilkinson, pp. 257-258. Copyright, 1925, by The Macmillan Co., reprinted by permission.

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suade her to save the first drafts of her manuscripts with all the changes and interlinings. This, we argued, would be a good way to study records of the creative process at work. She protested that they would be useless, because the really creative act occurs before putting pen to paper.

At the time she was working at high tension on her monumental life of Keats, and had written no poetry for almost two years. But that memorable night she began again. Several new poems came rapidly, first among them the one which follows. When she read it to us a week or so later, it was entitled, *To the Impudent Psychologist*.

But hardly a scrap of her first drafts has ever been found.

### TO A GENTLEMAN

Who wanted to see the first drafts of my poems in  
the interests of psychological research into the  
workings of the creative mind

So you want to see my papers, look what I have written down  
'Twixt an ecstasy and heartbreak, con them over with a frown.  
You would watch my thought's green sprouting ere a single blossom's blown.

Would you, friend? And what should I be doing, have you thought of that?  
Is it pleasant, think you, being gazed upon from feet to hat,  
Microscopically viewed by eyes commissioned just for that?

Don't assure me that your interest does not lie with me at all.  
I'm a poet to be dissected for the good of science. Call  
It by any name, I feel like some old root where fungi sprawl.

Think you, I could make you see it, all the little diverse strands  
Locked in one short poem? By no means do I find your prying hands  
Pleasure bearing and delightful straying round my lotus lands.

Not a word but joins itself with some adventure I alone  
Could attach consideration to. You'd wrench me flesh from bone,  
Find the heart and count itsappings. At your touch, 'twould turn to stone.

What is I, and what that other? That's your quest. I'll have you know  
Telling it would break it from me, it would melt like travelled snow.  
I will be no weary pathway for another's feet to go.

Seize the butterfly and wing it, thus you learn of butterflies.  
But you do not ask permission of the creature, which is wise.  
If I did consent, to please you, I should tell you packs of lies.

To one only will I tell it, do I tell it all day long.  
Only one can see the patches I work into quilts of song.  
Crazy quilts, I'm sure you'd deem them, quite unworthy of your prong.

## The Art Work in the Making

One must go half-way with poets, feel the thing you're out to find,  
Wonder even while you name it, keep it somehow still enshrined,  
Still encased within its leafage like an arbor honey-vined.

Lacking just this touch and tremor, how can I but shrink and clutch  
What I have to closer keeping. Little limping phantoms, such  
Are my poems before I've taught them how to walk without a crutch.

You mean well, I do not doubt it, but you're blind as any mule.  
Would you question a mad lover, set his love-making to rule?  
With your pulse upon his finger, watch him play the sighing fool?

Would he win the lady, tell me, with you by? Your calculations  
Might frustrate a future teeming with immeasurable equations.  
Which will prove the most important, your research or his relations?

Take my answer then, for, flatly, I will not be vivisected.  
Life is more to me than learning. If you clumsily deflected  
My contact with what I know not, could it surely be connected?

Scarcely could you, knowing nothing, swear to me it would be so.  
Therefore unequivocally, brazenly, I tell you "No!"  
To the fame of an avowal, I prefer my domino.

Still I have a word, one moment, stop, before you leave this room.  
Though I shudder thinking of you wandering through my beds of bloom,  
You may come with spade and shovel when I'm safely in the tomb.<sup>1</sup>

What can we deduce from these pronouncements regarding  
the art work in the making?

They tell us rather clearly that the art work is not the  
product of an inspiration, but of a slow growth. They tell  
us, furthermore, that in this growth two related processes  
are clearly discernible, namely, one process in the course of  
which

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;

during which the prospective art work consists of no more than  
thought's green sprouting and little limping phantoms, but  
this process leads up to a stage when the sprouts are blown  
into blossoms, when the imagination bodies forth the forms  
of things up to then unknown. In the second process the

<sup>1</sup> From *Ballads for Sale*, 1927. Used by permission of, and special arrangement with,  
Houghton Mifflin Company.

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little phantoms are taught to walk without a crutch, when  
the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

But these utterances tell us nothing definite as to what actually happens in the course of these processes. Here we must resort to spade and shovel, and we shall borrow those of J. Middleton Murry<sup>1</sup> who reverentially dug up the ground that Keats covered on the way to one of his most famous poems, the sonnet *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*.

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen,  
Round many a Western island have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold;  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
Which deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne  
Yet never could I judge what men could mean  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold.  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with wond'ring eyes  
He stared at the Pacific,—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent upon a peak in Darien.

The poem was written by Keats within a few hours after he and his friend Cowden Clarke had delved for the first time into Chapman's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Keats left Clarke at daybreak, and at ten o'clock in the morning the finished poem was on Clarke's breakfast table. On the surface, then, the poem was written between daybreak and breakfast time one day in October, 1816, when Keats became twenty-one years of age. As Mr. Murry states, "It is one of the great sonnets in the English language, and it was the first great poem Keats wrote. If the word 'inspiration' is ever to be used in literary criticism it might be used with some propriety here."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Keats*, London, 1930, Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

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But the "inspiration" was the flower of a long period of search and preparation, and Mr. Murry traces it through the labyrinth of Keats' rich mind and long labors. He shows the complexity of the structure of the poem, and yet, "the more the intricacy of the structure is realized the more impossible it becomes to conceive that the poem was constructed deliberately as a watchmaker constructs a chronometer."<sup>1</sup> Its genesis is rather like that of the new-born animal, "before whose birth there is indeed a long period of elaboration, but the elaboration is unconscious, and occurs in the darkness of the womb."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Murry then proceeds to trace this period of unconscious elaboration. Chapman's *Homer* was not the direct cause of the poem, but "has served the office of a spark to ignite a highly combustible gas in the poet's mind into a flash of perfect incandescence."<sup>3</sup> And the gas had been gathering gradually in the mind of the poet.

Mr. Murry finds a clue to the making of the poem "in its native setting among Keats' poetry of this period," namely, Keats' first volume of poetry. In that volume the sonnet, "besides being the one perfect poem in that uneven and exciting book, is a perfect crystallization of a mood of thought and feeling which exists in solution throughout the volume. In the sonnet Keats succeeded in expressing, with a strange completeness and concision, a complex condition of thought and feeling which finds imperfect and partial utterance in nearly all his serious poems of the same period."<sup>4</sup>

What is this condition that is crystallized in the poem? Mr. Murry calls it, "the ardor of exploration and the excitement of discovery."<sup>5</sup> At first the ardor of exploration is in the realm of poetry and nature. The poet finds the two realms to be one; "and he is a chained prisoner from both."<sup>6</sup> He is studying medicine, and the Borough where the medical students had their lodgings is a dirty place. He cries:

Far different cares  
Beckon me sternly from soft "Lydian airs"

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

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And hold my faculties so long in thrall,  
That I am oft in doubt whether at all  
I shall again see Phœbus in the morning . . .  
But might I now each passing moment give  
To the coy muse, with me she would not live  
In this dark city.

This is November, 1815. In the early summer of 1816 Keats climbed out of the dingy Borough to visit Cowden Clarke, a poet, at Hampstead Heath, thus finding his way to nature and poetry. Clarke "had shown some of Keats' verses to Leigh Hunt. Hunt had been, as he himself tells us, 'fairly surprised with the truth of their ambition and the ardent grappling with nature' and had invited Keats to his cottage in the Vale of Health on the Heath."<sup>1</sup> As a result of these visits and contacts with nature Keats cries:

Give me a golden pen, and let me lean  
On heap'd up flowers, in regions clear, and far;  
Bring me a table whiter than a star . . .  
The while let music wander round my ears,  
And as it reaches each delicious ending,  
Let me write down a line of glorious tone,  
And full of many wonders of the spheres;  
For what a height my spirit is contending!  
'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

But his visits to the Heath were not enough. "He must go away. And away he went, to Margate—to something he had not seen before, the sea."<sup>2</sup> His epistles to his brother George, to Mathew, to Clarke, during this period, "are concerned with a single theme, his consuming ambition to write poetry and his conviction that poetry is somehow directly created in the poet's soul by Nature."<sup>3</sup> Keats is discovering nature and therefore also poetry:

Open afresh your round of starry folds,  
Ye ardent marigolds!  
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,  
For great Apollo bids  
That in these days your praises should be sung  
On many harps, which he has lately strung.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

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He identifies his power of response to nature with his power of poetry. The poet is

ever startled by the leap  
Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting  
Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting;  
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim  
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim  
Coming into the blue with all her light.

He has thus discovered the beauty of nature, the beauty of poetry, and his power to express the beauty of nature in poetry. He is gaining confidence in himself, becoming ready for the supreme moment. Mr. Murry continues

Now let us take stock of our materials—what we have gathered towards the making of the Chapman sonnet. The moment is apt, for that spirit “standing apart upon the forehead of the age to come” is curiously reminiscent of Cortez on his peak in Darien. We have the ardor of exploration, the excitement of discovery: of Nature, of Poetry, and of Keats’ own powers of poetry. We have an ocean, that speaks to him unutterable things, upon which he looks down from a lofty cliff. We have, if not a planet, a moon, to whom he cries:

O maker of sweet poets, dear delight  
Of this fair world, and all its gentle lovers;

whom he had described first in *Calidore*,

Lovely the moon in ether, all alone,

and later as “with a gradual swim, coming into the blue with all her light.”

The discovery of poetry—the thing in itself and his own powers of it—the discovery of the moon, the discovery of the ocean. Since Nature and Poetry are one to him, why should not all these be the same? But how to express these as discoveries? The ocean had been discovered—why not the ocean when it was unknown? <sup>1</sup>

Keats is ready for the great leap, for the sonnet. The raw material is prepared. What is to bring it to the point of fusion?

Mr. Murry finds this catalytic agent in a poem of Keats’, entitled *Sleep and Poetry*, composed in 1816, after a “white night spent on the sofa at Hunt’s cottage where he lay thinking of poetry, with a picture of Petrarch and Laura before

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

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his eyes.”<sup>1</sup> “From the first,” says Mr. Murry of this poem, “we are conscious that the poet is straining to utter a conception of poetry too great for his words. He has had an intuition into a mystery, which he seeks again and again to declare. Poetry, he seems to be saying, is the instinctive response of the purified soul to the wonder and majesty of the Universe: through the poet the All finds voice.”<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Murry summarizes his study as follows:

But what can we claim to have accomplished by this inquiry? To have explained a great poem? Assuredly not. The act of composing the sonnet on Chapman's *Homer* remains unique and beyond analysis. But we can, I think, fairly claim to have substantiated the theory that the composition of a great poem is but a final conscious act supervening upon a long process of unconscious elaboration.

Can we, with the help of our evidence, more clearly define the nature of this process? What elements can we distinguish in it?

First and foremost, a predominant, constantly recurring complex of thought and emotion. Throughout the period of unconscious elaboration Keats had been continually discovering more and more of what was to him the highest reality: Nature, Poetry, the Nature of Poetry; and the continual discovery was accompanied by an incessant emotional excitement. Whether his successive acts of discovery can properly be called “thoughts” will depend upon the philosophy of the man describing them; but “thoughts” they shall be for us, as they were for Keats:

There came  
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame  
Within my breast . . .

These successive thoughts (which some would call intuitions), accompanied by an incessant emotional excitement, form what Coleridge calls “a predominant passion,” more exactly a persistent process of thought-emotion.

Second, in the service of this persistent thought-emotion the specific poetic-creative faculty has been continually at work to find means of expression for it. These means of expression are chiefly images derived from a series of particular sense-perceptions. Thus, the poet's first perception of the Moon:

Lovely the moon in ether, all alone  
is refined to a subtler perception of her

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.



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Lifting her silver rim  
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim  
Coming into the blue with all her light.

And this sense-perception is used to enable the poet to grasp his own thought of the nature of poetry. The smooth and lovely motion of the moon is a quality of the poetry he conceives:

More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal  
Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle.

So the image of the moon becomes an image of his thought of poetry.

Again, he sees the sea for the first time, and that perception of the sea, with its attendant emotion, enables him once again to grasp his main thought with its emotion. The image of the vast ocean also becomes an image of his vast "idea" of poetry. Nay more, the very sound of the sea,

which whoso hears  
Must think on what will be, and what has been,

enables him to make audible, as the sight of the sea to make visible his thought. Again, another aspect of his thought is grasped through the vision of himself standing alone on a cliff (at Margate) or on a hill (at Hampstead), staring with wondering eyes at the prospect before him. He is "a spirit standing apart upon the forehead of the age to come."

So the poet's mind has been accumulating through successive acts of sense-perception a series of images which can be assimilated into the main process of his thought and act as surrogates for it. And the condition of this assimilation is an emotional and qualitative correspondence. His perception of the moon is a delighted discovery, so is his perception of the ocean—in both the hidden loveliness of an unknown reality is revealed to him; therefore, both in the qualities discovered and in the emotion awakened in discovering them, these sense-discoveries are analogous to the main thought—discovery of the nature of poetry. With his senses he discovers Nature, with his thoughts he discovers the nature of poetry.

His two crowning sense-discoveries were those of the moon and sea, and those are instantly pressed into the service of his thought: the images of the moon and the ocean can serve at will to embody the objects of his thought. And he is able to think more exactly concerning the nature of poetry because the sensuous images of moon and ocean are become true symbols of the reality about which he is thinking. So that in the process of unconscious elaboration the continually progressing thought is given ever fresh definition and substance by the images it is able to assimilate; and, on the other hand,

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the images acquire a thought-content. The thought steadily gains focus and intensity; the images significance.

Suddenly this complex of thought and images, which is working itself towards an organic unity, is ejected into poetic form. What occasions this sudden birth? The dominant thought, with its attendant emotion, is given a final focus by a particular event. The discovery of the nature of poetry, which had been going on for months, is consummated by the discovery of Chapman's *Homer*. Utterance becomes urgent, necessary, inevitable. The means are at hand—images long since assimilated to that dominant thought-emotion, of which the discovery of Chapman is the final instance and occasion.

But there is a final creative act. If this unconscious preparation were all, we should imagine Keats in his sestet saying: "Then felt I—as I did when I discovered the moon, as I did when I discovered the ocean." But the moon was discovered long ago, and so was the ocean. It will not do. It must be: "Then felt I—as a man who discovers a new planet, as a man who discovers a new ocean." Then to his need came the memory of Robertson's *America*, which he had read as a schoolboy. An inexact memory—for as Tennyson pointed out, it was Balboa, not Cortez, who stared at the Pacific—but one definite enough to give the final perfection to his imagery.

Of the last act of poetic creation there is nothing to say. We cannot explain it; but it is no longer utterly miraculous. We have seen at least how the main materials lay ready prepared for the final harmonious ordering; part, and not the least part, of the final harmony had already been achieved; we may fairly say that the actual composition of this great poem was but the conscious last of a whole series of unconscious acts of poetic creation. And we may hazard the guess that it is this long period of unconscious preparation which distinguishes the great poem from the merely good one; but this is the reason why, in a great poem, the subject seems to be dissolved away in the incandescence of the emotion it kindles; and, finally, that this is the reason why the depths of significance in a great poem are inexhaustible.<sup>1</sup>

From this study of an art work in the making we see that Shakespeare's poet, whose eye rolls in a frenzy, glancing from earth to heaven and heaven to earth, or Lowell's thought's green sprouting and limping phantoms, is a process of adventure, a search instigated and initiated by a living, vital urge, neither conscious, nor subconscious, nor super-conscious, but all three, like life itself; that the adventure, long, anguishing, heartbreaking, but urgent, results in a discovery, a

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-33.

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fruition, when imagination bodies forth into full consciousness the forms of things previously unknown, the discovery in turn serving as a stimulus for another long, but now fully conscious, deliberate, rational activity, a process of execution, in the course of which that which the imagination has bodied forth is given a local habitation and a name, when the little limping phantoms are taught to walk without a crutch.

### 3

#### THE PROCESS OF ADVENTURE

If we are asked what it is that starts the adventure, all we can say is that it is a characteristic of the creative mind that in the actual, the commonplace, the old, it senses vaguely the presence of a potential, unique new, and that it cannot rest until the vague feeling has become a clear idea. This characteristic of sensing the new in the old and of bringing it forth is what is meant by creativeness. It is such a mind, and that is all that can be said. Why it is so, and whence it came, we do not know, unless we accept Plato's mystical explanation that it is the soul seeking to restore itself to its original state of perfection and purity, after being polluted by its association with the body. All we can do is accept the fact that there are such minds, and seek to understand their operations in order to understand their works. We know there is an adventure in the realm of the old, a discovery of the new and a recording of the new, with the result that the new permeates the old and is transformed by it. It is such minds that prevent life from becoming a stagnant pool of routine habit, and to whom we owe everything that we include in the terms culture and civilization.

The adventure is a self-searching, a growth in personality, a development in self-realization, hence it is not arbitrary, consciously planned out, but natural and spontaneous. It proceeds along two stages, a stage of preparation, and a stage of elaboration or maturation.

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### a. THE STAGE OF PREPARATION

In preparation the seed is sown in the fertile soil of a creative mind, to gestate, send forth sprouts, and grow into ripe fruit. Keats' preparation for the Chapman sonnet consisted of his experiences with the city streets, his journeys to the country, his discovery of nature, of the ocean, the moon, and the discovery of his own poetic powers. Coleridge gathered the raw material that incubated and matured into the fruits of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* in his wide and desultory readings of exotic literature, which took him, according to Professor John Livingston Lowes, "through all the lands and all the seven seas of the globe," where he encountered "as strange a concourse as ever haunted the slopes of Parnassus—with alligators and albatrosses and auroras and Antichthories; with biscuit-worms, bubbles of ice, bassoons, and breezes; with candles and Cain, and the Corpo Santo; Weoclesian, king of Syria, and the dæmons of the elements; earthquakes, and the Euphrates; frost-needles, and fog-smoke, and phosphorescent light; gooseberries, and the Gardonia Casianthus; halves and hurricanes; lightnings and Laplanders; meteors, and the Old Man of the Mountain, and stars behind the moon; nightmares, and the sources of the Nile; footless birds of Paradise, and the observatory at Pekin; swoons, and spectres, and slimy seas; wefts, and water-snakes, and the Wandering Jew."<sup>1</sup>

The note books of Milton and Shelley are the recorded witnesses of the endless sources from which genius gathers the preparatory material for its creative purposes. The artist is an æsthetic Midas. Everything he touches may at some future time turn into artistic gold, so that his whole life is a preparation for his work, all his experiences are raw material for creation, all his contacts with the world assume creative possibilities. Professor Lowes writes of Coleridge:

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to Xanadu*. Reprinted by permission of, and special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

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Coleridge's Note Book is a catch-all for suggestions jotted down chaotically from Coleridge's absorbing adventures among books. It is a repository of waifs and strays of verse, some destined to find a lodgment later in the poems, others yet lying abandoned where they fell, like drifted leaves. It is a mirror of the fitful and kaleidoscopic moods, and a record of the germinal ideas of one of the most gifted and utterly incalculable spirits ever let loose upon the planet. And it is like nothing else in the world so much as a jungle, illuminated eerily with patches of phosphorescent light, and peopled with uncanny life and strange exotic flowers. But it is teeming and fecund soil, and out of it later rose, like exhalations, gleaming and aërial shapes.<sup>1</sup>

In the stage of preparation the creative mind thus lays up treasures on earth to utilize in the heavens of creative imagination. Professor Lowes writes:

Every great imaginative conception is a vortex into which everything under the sun may be swept. "All other men's worlds," wrote Coleridge once, "are the poet's chaos." In that regard "The Ancient Mariner" is one with the noble army of imaginative masterpieces of all time. Oral traditions—homely, fantastic, barbaric, disconnected—which had ebbed and flowed across the planet in its unlettered days, were gathered up into that marvel of constructive genius, the plot of the *Odyssey*, and out of "a tissue of old *marchen*" was fashioned a unity palpable as flesh and blood and universal as the sea itself. Well nigh all the encyclopedic erudition of the Middle Ages was forged and welded, in the white heat of an indomitable will, into the steel-knit structure of the *Divine Comedy*. There are not in the world, I suppose, more appalling masses of raw fact than would stare us in the face could we once, through some super-subtle chemistry, resolve that superb, organic unity into its primal elements.<sup>2</sup>

### b. THE STAGE OF ELABORATION

The seeds planted in the soil of the creative mind during the stage of preparation must have time in which to develop whatever potentiality lies dormant in them. The development is subject to no laws but its own inherent nature. It will not be commanded or forced from the outside, although it may be influenced by external conditions. It will have its own time in which to grow, mature, flower, and bear fruit. When Schiller wrote to Goethe that what he had been brooding over in vain

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 426.

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for five weeks came to him as in a flash within three days, Goethe replied that: "We can do nothing but pile up the wood and let it dry; it will catch fire in due time, and we wonder over the occurrence." Preparation piles up the wood which dries and catches fire during the stage of gestation and maturation, from which it emerges as a new product, perfect and wondrous to behold.

This stage of the creative process is altogether unconscious, in the sense that the creator does not know what is happening, and consequently those accounts of it that we have are couched in hazy mysterious terms, regarding some higher power at work. Sir Philip Sydney writes in his *Defense of Poesie*,

Poesy . . . must be gently led, or rather it must lead. Which was partly the cause that made the ancient-learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill: sith all other knowledge lie ready for any that hath strength of wit: a poet no industry can make, if his own *genius* be not carried unto it: and therefore is it an old proverb, *orator fit, poeta nascitur*. Yet confess I always that as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest flying wit have a *Dædalus* to guide him. The *Dædalus*, they say, both in this and in other, hath three wings to bear itself up into the air of due commendation: that is, art, imitation, and exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we much cumber ourselves withal.

But that something is happening, that there is a process in operation, that the seed is not lying fallow in the ground, is attested to by other accounts. In a letter to his brother and sister Keats complained that he was "writing at random, straining after particles of light in the midst of a great darkness, without knowing the bearing of any one assertion, of any one opinion—" In a letter to Hunt, he gives another indication of this process of incubation and maturation:

I went to the Isle of Wight, thought so much about poetry, so long together, that I could not get to sleep at night; and, moreover, I know not how it is, I could not get wholesome food. By this means, in a week or so, I became not over-capable in my upper stories, and set off pell-mell for Margate, at least a hundred and fifty miles, because, forsooth, I fancied I should like my old lodgings here, and could continue to do without trees. Another thing, I was too much in solitude, and conse-

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quently was obliged to be in continual burning of thought as an only resource. However, Tom is with me at present, and we are very comfortable. We intend, though, to get among some trees. How have you got on among them? How are the nymphs? I suppose they have led you a fine dance. Where are you now?

I have asked myself so often why I should be a Poet more than other men, seeing how great a thing it is, how great things are to be gained by it, what a thing to be in the mouth of Fame, that at last the idea has grown so monstrously beyond my seeming power of attainment, that the other day I nearly consented with myself to drop into a Phaëton. Yet 'tis a disgrace to fail even in a huge attempt, and at this moment I drive the thought from me. I begun my poem about a fortnight since, and have done some every day, except traveling ones. Perhaps I may have done a good deal for the time, but it appears such a pin's point to me, that I will not copy any out. When I consider that so many of these pin-points go to form a bodkin-point (God send I end not my life with a bare bodkin, in its modern sense) and that it requires a thousand bodkins to make a star bright enough to throw any light to posterity, I see nothing but continual uphill journeying. Nor is there anything more unpleasant (it may come among the thousand and one) than to be so journeying and to miss the goal at last. But I intend to whistle all these cogitations into the sea, where I hope they will breed storms violent enough to block up all exit from Russia. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth writes:

And now it would content me to yield up  
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts  
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend:  
The Poet, gentle creature as he is,  
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;  
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,  
Though no distress be near him but his own  
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased  
While she as duteous as the mother dove  
Sits brooding, loves not always to that end,  
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on  
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;  
With me is now such passion, to be blamed  
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

In the light of such utterances the mystery of this unconscious elaboration and formation of the old into the new is

<sup>1</sup> R. M. Milnes, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats*, 1848, Putnam.

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somewhat dispelled. And it completely disappears when we compare the finished new product with the old material and note what has happened to it in the course of the transformation. The transformation occurs either as a reconstruction, an integration, an intuition, an abstraction, a generalization, or a transmutation.

In *reconstruction* some already existing product is disrupted and from the parts or elements a new entity constructed. A new invention is an instance in point. In the mental realm old ideas are rearranged, broken up, disintegrated, making possible the emergence of a new arrangement. Political, social, economic, moral, and religious changes are cases of creation by reconstruction. Nature creates by destroying the old as the new arises from it. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Reconstruction is thus a renewal, a rebirth of the old, its regeneration into a more vital form, preventing its stagnation. In the realm of art reconstruction is responsible for the constantly progressive technical accomplishments, the triumph of spirit over letter. The romantic, adventurous spirit of genius is cramped by the narrow letter of classicism and breaks through it to emerge into the new light of freedom. Genius can not tolerate the stifling, stagnant atmosphere of cold formalism, the set laws of artistic procedure. It must create its own atmosphere, blaze its own trails through the untraveled regions of mind, and in the course of its exploration treads roughshod and crushes under foot whatever obstructs its progress to its goal. Adherence to the established is the province of the imitative artist following in the footsteps of his leader, the creator. In his youth Richard Wagner was controlled by the operatic tradition of the predominance of voice over instrument. Because of the inner necessity of his genius, he gradually broke through this tradition, destroyed it, and the instrumental supersedes the vocal, since he felt that the orchestra is capable of more varied expression than the voice. Consequently in his works arias and melodies of the opera are more



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and more displaced by the recitative, which approximates spoken language and is therefore more plastic in expression than melody. In his hands, as a result, the limitation of the opera is displaced by the wider expressive possibilities of the music-drama.

In *integration* the new arises out of the old by a process of gathering together hitherto disparate, unrelated material culled from numerous sources and fusing it into a whole that differs, by virtue of its being a whole, from the sum total of the properties of its constituent parts. A unity has arisen out of a variety, the variety now having meaning only in terms of the unity. A novel or a drama is such a product, while Professor Lowes shows us in much detail how two great poems were evolved in this manner by the creative mind of Coleridge. Coleridge himself describes this process as a synthetic and magical power which "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities . . . the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; . . . the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling." The predominant thought or feeling, which itself has arisen from a preoccupation with the diverse raw material, becomes the central core around which the diversity gathers into unity. It is the "arrowy fire" of Browning, which runs up and down,

while earthly forms combine  
To throb the secret forth—a touch divine.

The touch divine is creative thought, which, ignited by the secret inherent in the fragments of earthly forms, acts upon them with an increasing heat until they yield up the full secret in the whole into which they have been gradually fused.

In *intuition* the new emerges out of the old by a process of insight. As intuition creative thought is the power of penetrating the surface or outer-side of experience supplied by

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sensory perception into its core or inner-side. On its outside experience is transient, sequential, partial, and fragmentary, and therefore incomplete. I observe a man, and on the surface, externally, I see no more than a series of acts, which he performs more or less in common with other men. He is just one among many, and his whole meaning as a man is no more than that of his being just one more of a kind. On the surface he has no uniqueness, no special distinctiveness, no meaning as a personality. And even if his acts are different from those of other persons, they are just that and no more, since there is no significance, no cause for them apparent externally. But these acts emanate from somewhere, they are the effects of a cause, and if they are different from the acts of others they are so because they arise from some source that is as unique as the acts are different. This source is then the reality of which the acts are the outward appearances or manifestations. They are the parts of the basic whole, the varied effects of a single cause. When this cause or whole is detected, the parts which were formerly common and insignificant in themselves become unique, significant, while the personality which formerly was just one among many, becomes one out of many, outstanding, distinctive, and significant in itself. The acts, or parts, become transformed, transfigured by the light cast upon them by the whole of which they are the partial expression or manifestation. But this whole is not apparent in the parts, is not subject to direct sensory experience. It can not be seen in them, it can only be experienced through them, evolved or created out of them, the light gained by this penetration reflecting upon the parts and illuminating them with a new significance. This is the power of creation by intuition, by insight, in terms of which the transient becomes a witness of the permanent, and the imperfect and incomplete the outer testimony of the perfect and complete. Genius possesses this power to a marked degree. "On hearing the people of the street," wrote Balzac, "I was able to wed myself to their life; I felt their rags on my back; I walked with my feet in their torn shoes; their desires, their needs, everything

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passed into my soul, and my soul passed into their's—it was the dream of a man awake."

Balzac not only saw these people with his eyes, and observed their actions; he lived their life in his mind, their thoughts were his thoughts, their feelings were his feelings, their actions were his actions. From this power of intuition, of projecting his being into that of others, of merging himself with others and others with himself, is derived the great living truth and vitality of the characters in his novels. In this power lies also the secret of great acting. A great actress wrote in her reminiscences that in reading a play in which she was to appear her procedure was to immerse herself in it completely. If it affected her she found herself in a unique state in which she saw the characters, particularly those she might enact, vividly and vitally, in all their details, not outside of herself, but within her. When that happened she knew that she could enact the rôle. If this state did not occur spontaneously all mental effort to make it live was in vain, and if she had to play the part the performance was mechanical and wearisome. This is what Emerson meant in substance when he wrote that "Thoughts let us into realities, neither miracle nor magic nor any religious tradition, not the immortality of the private soul is incredible, after we have experienced an insight, a thought."

Creation by *abstraction* is a process in the course of which those constituents of experience imposed by practical needs are eliminated until all that remains is experience in its essence and substance, namely, pure form. Ordinarily, due to the exigencies of the practical demands of life, the world of forms is clothed with meanings that are extraneous to the form itself, that are imposed upon it by the experient. We must do something about a situation, we must react to it in order to live, so we clothe it in the raiment of our needs to suit our purposes. We do not accept it as it is in itself in its naked purity, as it comes to us directly from the lap of nature, but we stand over it aggressively demanding of it to tell us what it is good for, what we can get out of it. When we get through

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questioning it, it is no longer itself but what we have made of it. A form is not a form, but a chair to sit in, or a house to live in, or an article of food to satisfy hunger, or a hat to wear. A man is not a personality, but a good or poor worker, a plumber or preacher, rich or poor, influential, and therefore to be courted in view of favors he might bestow on us or harm he may do us if displeased, or he is minus influence and consequently may be disregarded with impunity, or even slighted or insulted. Ordinarily, an idea is not valuable as an idea, but only in what it can yield us. We want to know what it is good for, what can be derived from it that might aid us to satisfy the better some practical need, whether actual or fancied. We thus impose upon experience, clutter it up with the débris of our needs and wants. In abstraction this débris is removed to permit the experience to stand for itself and by itself, in all its pristine, original nature. In our day creation by abstraction is most evident in the so-called modern movement in painting, poetry, and the novel, in the attempt to free these arts from their long historical bondage in the service of conventional morality.

In *generalization* the creative mind brings about order out of chaos by seeking and establishing some wide, embracing, inclusive idea or law that operates in particular, observable phenomena, thereby turning the particular into a symbol of the general. A word of common usage like *mankind* is an instance of a general idea derived from particular individual men, and embracing all particular individual men. Such a term becomes creative, that is uniquely significant and operative, when any one single man, black, white, yellow, or brown, and irrespective of clime, time, place, or position, becomes a living symbol of everything that man is in body, mind, and spirit, actual or potential. Jesus had such a creative concept of men, which was the source of his unique attitude towards every human being. For him the woman taken in adultery was not so much one person falling a victim to the lusts of the flesh, as a symbol of mankind in its sufferings and weaknesses, yet a reflection, an image of supreme perfection

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and beauty as incorporated in the all-inclusive and all-embracing idea of God. Hence, to abuse her was to abuse mankind, to sin against God. The Platonic realm of ideas is another case of such creative generalization. In that realm, love, justice, truth, beauty exist as pure and perfect because complete, while in man they are present only in an incomplete and consequently imperfect and impure form. Every particular man has love, justice, truth, and beauty in him and is therefore a symbol of them. When he becomes conscious of his symbolic nature he becomes creative, for he will strive to transform the part into the nature of the whole, to make that which is imperfect and incomplete into a true image, a reflection of the perfect and complete. Unless one becomes aware of his symbolism he will mistake the part for the whole, the many for the one, the imperfect for the perfect, the appearance for the reality. Every scientific law is such a created and creative concept. The general law was created out of specific events, the events thereby becoming particular, partial manifestations and reflections of the general idea. The true scientist does not value that law because of any practical application, but solely for its being the unity, the reality, underlying diverse appearances. To the genuine scientist science is an art, the law a creation of beauty, a building-out of the new out of the old, in the course of which the old is transformed into the aspect of the new. For Newton the laws of the movements of the celestial bodies were witnesses to the glory and beauty of God, while Einstein identifies science with religion.

In *transmutation* the creative mind builds an ideal world out of the actual by deliberately denying the reality of the actual and affirming the reality of the ideal. For Browning

The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hillside's dew pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world.

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while Henley affirms that

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

In *The Concert*, Edna St. Vincent Millay denies the reality of the gruesome in war and offers the reality

Of armies without a country  
Storming a nameless gate  
Hurling terrible javelins down  
From the shouting wall of a singing town  
Where no women wait.

and in the following quaint fancy J. M. Barrie denies the reality of fleeting time and offers the reality of eternity.

How comely a thing is affliction borne cheerfully, which is not beyond the reach of the humblest of us. What is beauty? It is these hard-bitten men singing courage to you from their tent; it is the waves of their island home crooning of their deeds to you who are to follow them. Sometimes beauty boils over and then spirits are abroad. Ages may pass as we look or listen, for time is annihilated. There is a very old legend told to me by Nansen the explorer—I like well to be in the company of explorers—the legend of a monk who had wandered into the fields and a lark began to sing. He had never heard a lark before, and he stood there entranced until the bird and its song had become part of the heavens. Then he went back to the monastery and found there a doorkeeper whom he did not know and who did not know him. Other monks came, and they were all strangers to him. He told them he was Father Anselm, but that was no help. Finally they looked through the books of the monastery, and these revealed that there had been a Father Anselm there a hundred or more years before. Time had been blotted out while he listened to the lark.<sup>1</sup>

X The substance of every significant art work is the fruit of one or the other, or of one or more, of these ways of creative thought in the process of preparation-elaboration. The process is intimately personal. No answer to a problem is being deliberately sought, no scheme of action is being rationally planned, no result is consciously anticipated. The creator is simply living. He is obeying the law of creative mindedness

<sup>1</sup> *Courage*, Scribner's, pp. 33-34.

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for growth. He is engaged upon an exploration of life, an adventure in vivid, enhanced living. He is occupied with the discovery, and hence also the realization of his self in and through the maelstrom of the non-self, of the world about him. The urge for living drives him relentlessly from experience to experience, from attainment to attainment, from peak to valley and valley to peak, in the endless journey of self-realization through self-discovery. Each of Keats' poems prior to the Chapman sonnet represents one step in the journey towards self-realization attained in that poem. He was not seeking so much to write poems, but to find poetry, which was for him the substance of existence, the truth and beauty of life, which was not only all that he needed to know or could know, but had to know in order to really live. His poems are the records of this search for the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth, of this yearning to find himself, to make articulate the still small voice of his true being. The whole life of the creative mind is thus one constant stage of preparation and maturation, each art work being a landmark, a record, of its progressive discoveries. For while the creative mind is seeking it is also finding, each finding being, however, but an invitation, a stimulus for a further seeking. Goethe's seventy years of life represent the journey of preparatory seekings and findings which culminated in his supreme creative effort, *Faust*. *Faust* is Goethe, ripe, mature, fully grown, fully realized, with the span of those seventy years of life and work forming the roots that nourished the trunk and branches of the tree that made possible the perfect fruit of *Faust*. During those years the wood was being piled up and drying, awaiting the spark that would ignite it in due time.

Since this stage is a spontaneous, natural growth it will not be forced from the outside, although it may be aided or abetted by external circumstances. And since it is also autistic, unconscious, non-deliberate, in that its final fruit is as yet but a potentiality, the mental activity seems to the creator himself to be idle, haphazard, and futile. Alexander Pope wrote:

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. . . I believe no mortal ever lived in such indolence and inactivity of body, though my mind be perpetually rambling—it no more knows whither than poor Adrian's did when he lay a-dying. Like a witch, whose carcass lies motionless on the floor, while she keeps her airy sabbaths, and enjoys a thousand imaginary entertainments abroad, in this world and in others, I seem to sleep in the midst of the hurry, even as you would swear a top stands still, when it is in the whirl of its giddy motion. It is no figure, but a serious truth I tell thee, when I say that my days and nights are so much alike, so equally insensible of any moving power but fancy, that I have sometimes spoke of things in our family as truths and real accidents, which I only dreamt of; and again, when some things that actually happened came into my head, have thought, till I enquired, that I had only dreamed of them.

Nevertheless, there are indications in the course of this process that these apparently futile mental wanderings are as the scattered clouds in the sky heralding the approach of the storm. There are occasional faint distant rumblings and brief streaks of lightning in the form of flashes of illuminations or inspirations, announcing the coming glory of the birth of an idea in due time. These are premature birthpangs, but prophetic omens of a coming maturity. These omens often deceive the creator with an appearance of full growth, but he is soon undeceived if he makes any effort to deliver the mental child. "A poet," writes Robert Graves, "reveals to a friend in a fit of excitement,

"'I say, listen, I am going to write a great poem on such-and-such! I have the whole thing clear in my mind, waiting to be put down.'"  
But if he goes on to give a detailed account of the scheme, then the act of expression (especially prose expression) kills the creative impulse by presenting it prematurely with too much definiteness. The poem is never written. It remains for a few hopeless days as a title, a couple of phrases and an elaborate scheme of work, and is then banished to the lumber room of the mind; later it probably becomes subsidiary to another apparently irrelevant idea and appears after a month or two in quite a different shape, the elaboration very much condensed, the phrase altered and the title lost.<sup>1</sup>

### 4

#### THE PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

This process differs from the process of adventure from which it emanates, by being fully conscious, in that the creator

<sup>1</sup> *On English Poetry*, Knopf.



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now labors in the full light of an objective to be attained. The fruit is ready, and the plans for its harvesting are in progress and soon to be put in operation. The imagination has now bodied forth the forms of things unknown, and they call loud and strong to be given a local habitation and a name. The adventure is over, the discovery has been made, and now calls for a record to be made of it. There is great rejoicing over the discovery, particularly so because it came in so unexpected a manner, but the enthusiasm must give way to the calm, but nevertheless arduous, labor of reporting the great news in the most vivid, clear, and concise manner possible. The ardor of the adventure and the enthusiasm of the discovery now give way to the arduousness of painful, fatiguing, and nerve racking labor of execution.

### a. THE INSPIRATION

The discovery is the "dear mystery" of the creative process spoken of as inspiration or illumination. Because it comes upon the heels of the subconscious process of incubation it gives the appearance of hailing from some source other than the person of the creator himself. "Every product of higher art," wrote Goethe, "every significant apercu, every thought which yields fruit, lies in no man's control, but is raised above all earthly power. The man is controlled by a demon while he believes he is directing his own activities. In such instances a man is a tool of a higher ruling power, a favored receptacle of divine influences." He is in the hands of the muses, of a personality other than his own, as pictured so invitingly by J. M. Barrie in *Courage* where he contrasts his everyday self with his writing self.

My special difficulty is that though you have had literary rectors here before, they were the big guns, the historians, the philosophers; you have had none, I think, who followed my more humble branch, which may be described as playing hide and seek with angels. My puppets seem more real to me than myself, and I could get on much more swingingly if I made one of them deliver this address. It is M'Connachie who has brought me to this pass. M'Connachie, I should explain, as I have undertaken to open the innermost doors, is the name I give to the unruly half of myself: the writing half. We are

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complement and supplement. I am the half that is dour and practical and canny, he is the fanciful half; my desire is to be the family solicitor, standing firm on my hearth rug among the harsh realities of the office furniture; while he prefers to fly around on one wing. I should not mind him doing that, but he drags me with him. I have sworn that M'Connachie shall not interfere with this address to-day; but there is no telling. I might have done things worth while if it had not been for M'Connachie, and my first piece of advice to you at any rate shall be sound: don't copy me. A good subject for a rectorial address would be the mess the rector himself has made of life. I merely cast this forth as a suggestion, and leave the working of it out to my successor. I do not think it has been used yet.<sup>1</sup>

This other self has its psychological cause in the unusual emotional state aroused by the discovery, so that the self is no longer that of the adventurer, perplexed, uncertain, but a new, sure, and certain being, who has conquered the world. Thus William Butler Yeats sings:

I call to the mysterious one who yet  
Shall walk the wet sand by the water's edge,  
And look most alike me, being indeed my double,  
And prove of all imaginable things  
The most unlike, being my anti-self.

Wordsworth gives an excellent account of the effect of this moment of illumination upon his normal self:

Imagination—here the Power so called  
Through sad incompetence of human speech,  
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss  
Like an unfathered vapor that enwraps,  
At once, some lonely traveler. I was lost;  
Halted without an effort to break through;  
But to my conscious soul I now can say—  
"I recognize thy glory:" in such strength  
Of usurpation, when the light of sense  
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed  
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,  
There harbors; whether we be young or old,  
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,  
Is with infinitude, and only there;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort, and expectation, and desire,

<sup>1</sup> *Courage*, Scribner's, pp. 3-4.

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And something evermore about to be.  
Under such banners militant, the soul  
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils  
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts  
That are their own perfection and reward,  
Strong in herself and beatitude  
That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile  
Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds  
To fertilize the whole Egyptian plain.

It is of inspiration that Plato speaks so eloquently in the *Phaedrus* as "divine madness," and to which the poet "A. E." (George Russell) refers when he writes:

I believed then, and still believe, that the immortal in us has memory of all its wisdom, or, as Keats puts it in one of his letters, there is an ancestral wisdom in man and we can if we wish drink that old wine of heaven. This memory of the spirit is the real basis of imagination, and when it speaks to us we feel truly inspired and a mightier creature than ourselves speaks through us. I remember how pure, holy and beautiful these imaginations seemed, how they came like crystal water sweeping aside the muddy current of my life, and the astonishment I felt, I who was almost inarticulate, to find sentences which seemed noble and full of melody sounding in my brain as if another and greater than I had spoken them; and how strange it was also a little later to write without effort verse, which some people still think has beauty, while I could hardly, because my reason had then no mastery over the materials of thought, pen a prose sentence intelligently. I am convinced that all poetry is, as Emerson said, first written in the heavens, that is, it is conceived by a self deeper than appears in normal life, and when it speaks to us or tells us its ancient story we taste of eternity and drink the Soma juice, the elixir of immortality.<sup>1</sup>

The most vivid account of the state of inspiration is given by Nietzsche. He writes:

Can any one at the end of this nineteenth century possibly have any distinct notion of what poets of a more vigorous period meant by inspiration? If not, I should like to describe it. Provided one has the slightest remnant of superstition left, one can hardly reject completely the idea that one is the mere incarnation, or mouthpiece, or medium of some almighty power. The notion of revelation describes the condition quite simply; by which I mean that something profoundly convulsive and disturbing suddenly becomes visible and audible with in-

<sup>1</sup> *The Candle of Vision*. Copyright 1918, by The Macmillan Company, pp. 75-76. Reprinted by permission.

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describable definiteness and exactness. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives: a thought flashes out like lightning, inevitably without hesitation—I have never had any choice about it. There is an ecstasy whose terrific tension is sometimes released by a flood of tears, during which one's progress varies from involuntary impetuosity to involuntary slowness. There is a feeling that one is utterly out of hand, with the most distinct consciousness of an infinitude of shuddering thrills that pass through one from head to foot;—there is a profound happiness in which the most painful and gloomy feelings are not discordant in effect, but are required as necessary colors in this overflow of light. There is an instinct for rhythmic relations which embraces an entire world of forms (length, the need for a widely extended rhythm, is almost a measure of the force of inspiration, a sort of counterpart to its pressure and tension). Everything occurs quite without volition, as if in an eruption of freedom, independence, power and divinity. The spontaneity of the images and similes is most remarkable; one loses all perception of what is imagery and simile; everything offers itself as the most immediate, exact, and simple means of expression.<sup>1</sup>

### b. THE EXECUTION

Genius has often been defined as consisting of ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration. Like all other glib statements, this one contains one per cent of truth and ninety-nine per cent of falsehood, for the inspiration is inseparable from the perspiration, in that the former is not only the stimulus, the driving force for the latter, but also its sole justification. The value of the labor of execution is derived from and is in direct proportion to the end that is to be attained through it. Without the inspiration no amount of perspiration can produce anything of real significance as an art work. Only the fire of inspiration can generate a truly effective heat of execution that moulds and shapes a proper local habitation for the forms bodied forth by the imagination. Execution may, and most often does, involve long sustained physical and mental labor and heart-break. But all these are instigated and directed by the end to be achieved through them: the adequate expression in material form of the significant, unique experience evolved during preparation-matura-

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Homo*, Modern Library, pp. 99-100.

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tion and reaching fruition in inspiration. It is the birth of the wondrous, perfect child that gives rise to the serious concern of its proper training which must be cautiously pursued lest the perfect lose its perfection and the wondrous turn out to be the commonplace as it reaches full growth as a finished product. If the child were not initially perfect and wondrous its training would call for little caution and concern, nor would the finest of training be of much avail. It is only when in the course of training the perfection and wonder become increasingly obvious that great zeal is exercised in the choice of proper nourishment. Quite often just the reverse is the case. As the child grows, its original wonder and perfection turn out to have been a deception, a false alarm, and it is disclaimed or even discarded by its parent. When the great enthusiasm and joy generated by the new on its arrival is somewhat abated, there sets in a period of calm deliberation and evaluation of its true worth, an evaluation which either sets up a new enthusiasm, an eagerness to do justice to it if found true to expectation, to spare no pains in developing its true nature and worth, or, if disappointing, its growth becomes a matter of indifference or is completely disregarded.

Now it is this zeal, this eagerness to do justice to a true child of the creative mind that is the source of the relentless effort that characterizes the creator in dealing with the tools and materials, the mechanisms, of his art. The letter must not only reflect the spirit, but become the spirit. The form must so fit the content, the matter must so clothe the idea, that the two are merged, wedded, and united to a point when matter loses its identity by becoming idea. Only when the artist succeeds in his labors to this point of identification has he created a mould for his shapes fit to sustain their beauty and their strength. The construction of such perfect forms is the welcome task imposed upon the artist by the moment of inspiration, and it is in the degree of his success in this task that his standing as an artist is made manifest. Many are called to inspiration, but few are chosen for execution. The true mark of the artist is this ceaseless labor towards mastery

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of his formal material in order to attain that spontaneity in execution when his art will become truly artless, when all signs of effort, of labor, are effaced from his work.

The chief conscious concern of the artist is therefore with the labor in the interest of perfection. His labors are his life, of which the final product is to him primarily an evidence of his degree of success or failure. When the artist then speaks of his works it is principally in terms of the conscious labor expended upon them, of the difficulties he encountered and handled on the road to facility. Those very happy touches of genius discernible in his work which it seems no study or labor could attain are the very ones due to long sustained endeavor. Every artist blazes his own trail to the promised land of each of his achievements, from which the uniqueness, the originality, of his work is derived. It is work alone, as Whistler said, that effaces the footsteps of work. Chopin would rewrite a single passage a hundred times, raging and pacing his room, biting his pen and tearing up sheets, which at times reduced him to tears, while the agony of Whistler's labors were so great that often after a day's work on a painting he would collapse as from an illness when things did not go so well. Tolstoi, reports Stefan Zweig, "was one of the most diligent and painstaking of penmen; his literary frescoes were mosaics, laboriously pieced together out of millions upon millions of details, out of countless minute and particular observations. What looks as if it had been sketched freehand in broad and bold and clear outline, has really been the result of strenuous craftsmanship on the part of a man who did not see things in sweeping vision, but set to work slowly and patiently and concretely." Shakespeare, in the words of Masefield, "grew by continual, very difficult mental labor, by the deliberate and prolonged exertion of every mental weapon, and by the resolve to do not the nearest thing 'precious' to human sheep, but the difficult, new and noble thing, glimmering behind his mind, and brought to glow there by toil."

It is thus by the fruits of his toil that the artist reveals the nature of the kingdom of heaven that is within him. And it is

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a toil, a laborious plodding, and not a rambling about, because it is prompted, commanded, and directed by a clarity of vision, definiteness of end to be attained, to say exactly what one must say in just the manner that one must say it, because it is so very important. There is, therefore, the chiseling, the forging, the shaping, the choosing, the rejecting, the giving up in despair and the resuming in hope, the disappointment amidst triumph, and triumph amidst disappointment, as the craftsman in the artist is aspiring to give perfect shape to the artist in the craftsman. And the artist in the craftsman is ever disappointed in the craftsman, for the craftsman's grasp can never attain to the artist's reach. The finished product is but a shadow, an imperfect representation, of the substance and perfection of the idea. The calm of reason cools and dulls somewhat the keen edge of the heat of imagination, so that what execution presents as the product of imagination appears as but an imitation of what imagination evolved. The ideal loses its ideality when it becomes the actual, the letter pollutes the spirit, even though without the letter it would be nothing but an attenuated ghost. So the creator is ever disappointed in triumph, but also triumphant in his disappointment, for no matter how imperfectly the perfect is manifested, no matter how shadow hides substance, the fire has nevertheless transformed and transfigured the impure, the potential has nevertheless become the actual, the grasp has come closer to the reach. There is joy in grief, and the grief becomes a stimulus for joy to come. If attainment were without sorrow, striving would die in infancy. Moses died happy because he died before reaching the promised land, for he died with the pure vision and was spared the impure realization. The creator's mind lives in the struggle and joy of anticipation, and dies in the triumph and sorrow of realization, only to be reborn anew with a renewed vision and to begin a new struggle and joy of anticipation. Its peak of attainment is a death and a rebirth, for one must die to be reborn, or live a living death.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CREATIVE MIND

About the creative personality there has always been much curiosity due to the attention aroused by its unusual behavior. The so-called artistic temperament has been termed divine and devilish, sublime and ridiculous, delineated in caricature and described in language of awe. What sort of mentality is behind the art work, what sort of personality is the creative artist?

The behavior of artistic genius can be properly evaluated only in the light of its mentality, and its mentality we can readily study by comparing it with the mental status of its fellow-beings. The genius is a human being like other human beings. He is of the world with other men, he looks like other men, acts like them, evinces desires like theirs, and yet there is something in him and about him that is not like others. He is like others, but he is different in his likeness. He is then apparently not different in kind, but only so in degree.

But degree of what? Obviously the degree of mental power possessed by other human beings, power of sensation, perception, memory, and imagination. Genius seems to be supreme in all those activities, interests, and powers, that all of us possess in a lesser degree. All of us see and hear, feel, understand, remember, imagine, and express ourselves, but genius, as is obvious from its products, can do all these things in a superlative manner. The world therefore means more to genius than to non-genius. Genius is more alive, more susceptible to the world about it than other human beings.

We may therefore say, in general, that genius is an enhanced, superior capacity for living. The question, then, as to the nature of genius, reduces itself to an examination of what it is in the mental equipment of genius that makes such living possible.

We can attempt an answer to this question by the data



furnished by scientific experimentation in the field of musical artistry, on the basis of which we may draw some general conclusions on the mentality of artistic genius in whatever field of art it happens to operate.

### 1

#### THE NATURE OF MUSICAL TALENT

Investigations on the nature of musical talent are based upon two facts amply supported by the experiences of those who train the prospective musical artist, namely, that artistic musical performance rests, in the end, upon an innate equipment which is bestowed by nature upon human beings unequally, and that this equipment, or talent, is not a single power, but consists of a cluster of specific powers, all of which one must possess to a high and somewhat equal degree in order to attain any position above mediocrity as a performer. Thus, one of the greatest violin masters and teachers of this generation expressed himself to the effect that: "One great mistake lies in the failure of so large a majority of those who decide to devote themselves to music—to learning some string instrument, the violin, for example—to ascertain at the very outset whether nature has adequately supplied them with the necessary tools for what they have in mind."

What these tools or innate powers are has been derived from three sources.

The first source that shed some light on the factors of musical artistry was the examination of children of outstanding musical endowment. These children were subjected to various tests in order to determine what were their outstanding qualities as potential musicians. A concrete case will serve to illustrate this procedure.

Pepito Arriola was a noted Spanish prodigy. When three and a half years of age he played twenty piano pieces from memory, having learned these by ear. He could play a selection after two or three hearings and would also reproduce on the piano that which had been sung to him, and supply the

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melody with an accompaniment. What he once played he never forgot. He readily improvised on the piano, and his productions of this type showed a marked feeling for form and structure, while his interpretations of musical works showed unusual musical insight. Intellectually Pepito was developed far beyond his age. When six years old he learned to speak German in a few months, and read German and Latin script with ease. He solved problems in addition of two and three figures orally, never having had any instruction. He learned his letters and numbers by spelling out the names of streets on street corners and by reading the numbers on house doors. During the tests that were given him he was constantly on the alert and on no occasion could the purpose of the test be hidden from him. He delighted in the apparatus and wanted to manipulate it. He was very temperamental and restless. On entering a room he seemed to be everywhere at once. At one moment he would be elated, jubilant, and the next moment would come anger and tears, to be followed soon by smiles and joy. On the psychological tests, Pepito showed himself to be the possessor of the following musical powers:

1. He could easily judge pitch intervals.
2. He possessed absolute pitch.
3. He had a wonderful musical memory.
4. He could transpose a musical composition with great ease and apparent joy.
5. When a few measures of an improvisation were played for him he would readily continue the musical suggestion and carry it to a logical conclusion. Music seemed to be to him a natural medium for emotional expression.
6. He would reproduce difficult dissonant chords with much ease and with but few mistakes, and he would also easily reproduce a succession of four unmelodic unrelated tones.
7. His ranking in pitch discrimination was very high.
8. He exhibited a keen sensitivity for the purity of intervals.

Another source from which the inventory was derived, was the pronouncements of master music teachers on artistic

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musical production. For instance, Professor Leopold Auer enumerates the following essentials:

A keen sense of hearing is, above all, one of the qualities which a musician needs. One who does not possess it in the highest degree, is wasting his time when he centers his ambitions on a musical career. Of course, one may perfect one's musical hearing if the faculty exists in even a rudimentary form—though the student will have to be quick to improve it by exact attention to the advice given him, and by unremitting watchfulness while he is at work—but there must be a certain amount of auditory sensibility to begin with.

(Furthermore) . . . one of the qualifications most important to the musician is a sense of rhythm. Together with the sense of hearing, it is a *sine qua non* for every one who wishes successfully to devote himself to music. The more conspicuously nature has gifted the young musical aspirant with a discriminating sense of hearing and a strong feeling for rhythm, the greater are his chances of reaching his goal. There is still, however, one more quality which the promising student must possess. It is what the French call *l'esprit de son metier*, the feeling of the professional man for the detail of his profession. He should have, by intuition—by instinct—the faculty of grasping all the technical fine points of his art, and an easy comprehension of all shades of musical meaning.<sup>1</sup>

The third source from which the inventory was obtained was from the comments of great artists concerning their own performances. Thus, according to Elman, the fundamental of a perfected violin technique is perfect pitch:

Many a violinist plays a difficult passage, sounding every note and yet it sounds out of tune. Many a player has the facility; but without perfect intonation he can never attain the highest perfection. On the other hand, anyone who can play a single phrase in absolute pitch has the great and first essential. Few artists, not excepting some of the greatest, play with perfect intonation. Its control depends first of all on the ear. And a sensitive ear finds differences in shading; it bids the violinist play a trifle sharper, a trifle flatter, according to the general harmonic color and the accompaniment; it leads him to observe a difference when the harmonic atmosphere demands it, between a C sharp in the key of E major and a D flat in the same key.<sup>2</sup>

Another factor stressed is tonal quality. On this point Professor Auer expresses himself as follows:

<sup>1</sup> *Violin Playing as I Teach It*, 1921, Stokes, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> F. H. Martens, *Violin Mastery*, Stokes.

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The problem involved in the production of an entirely agreeable tone—that is to say a tone which is *singing* to a degree that leads the hearer to forget the physical process of its development—is one whose solution must always be the most important task of those who devote themselves to mastering the violin.<sup>1</sup>

Another item emphasized is that of tone inflection. To quote Professor Auer again:

I regard *nuance* in music as a specific application of Nature's variability of mood and tone to musical ends and aims. Nature is never monotonous—the violinist who realizes the fact, and gives his playing those qualities of nuance, which diversify Nature's every mood and aspect will never play in a stilted, tiresome fashion. His interpretation will never be conceived on a dead level of uniformity.<sup>2</sup>

A further factor mentioned by artists is that of virtuosity or technique. In the words of Mr. Ysaye:

At the present day, the tools of violin mastery, of expression technique, mechanism, are far more necessary than in days gone by. In fact, they are indispensable if the spirit is to express itself without restraint, and the greater mechanical command one has the less noticeable it becomes. All that suggests effort, awkwardness, difficulty, repels the listener.

With this inventory of the tools of musical mastery as determined by master-performers and teachers, let us now see upon what equipments in the make-up of the individual each is conditioned.

First comes *tone production* which includes *intonation* and *tone quality*. It is evident that intonation depends first of all upon a keen ear—an ear that is sensitive to the fine differences in pitch, an ear that discriminates readily and accurately slight pitch deviations. A person whose pitch discrimination is poor, might play off pitch without being aware of the fault, since he does not hear it. A second equipment functioning in correct intonation is motor or muscular, which is conditioned upon the proper conformation of hand and fingers. Poor motor control, coördination, and adjustment mean that a performer might be aware of producing faulty pitch, and yet not be able to make the necessary muscular adjustments to

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

correct the fault. The fingers refuse to obey the dictates of the ear. It is only when ear and muscles are both keenly sensitive and working hand in hand that correct intonation is possible.

Tonal quality, like intonation, depends upon sensory as well as motor capacity. The ear must be sharply sensitive to differences of timbre before the hand can produce them. In other words, when the performer does not feel a need for a singing tone or his conception of a singing tone is crude, the hand naturally will not produce any better effect than the ear calls for. On the other hand, the ear might call for a beautiful tone, but the hand be unable to produce the desired effect because of muscular defects. The items, then, that function specifically in the production of tonal quality are first of all, an ear sensitive to timbre, and the muscular control that enables the performer to produce the desired effect.

A second main factor is *tone inflection*. This implies the ability to produce such musical effects as piano, forte, crescendo, diminuendo, and all other intensity variations without which a performance is dull and monotonous. The factors upon which the production of these effects is conditioned are, as in the previous cases, a sensitive ear, an ear that can detect very fine dynamic inflections, and secondly, fine muscular sensitivity plus coördination of ear and hand.

The third factor is *phrasing*. The phrase is the structural æsthetic unit of music; the interpretation of a musical composition resting upon the performer's conception and rendition of its constituent phrases. As the phrase, so the entire composition. Now, a phrase is a rhythmic unit, made up of a sequence of tones of varied pitches and durations, all combining to produce a symmetrical, balanced, æsthetic whole, and yet also arousing an expectation for a sequential phrase. Each phrase has an individuality all its own, and yet is not sufficient unto itself. It is an individual in a society of individuals, having its own earmarks, its distinguishing characteristics, and yet depending for its full realization upon the other unities or individuals that constitute the composition as a whole.

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Furthermore, some phrases are more important than others, have a more important place in the composition than others. From the point of view of phrasing, then, an artistic rendition is conditioned upon (1) the performer's musical understanding of, and his æsthetic response to, the musical composition as a whole; (2) his evaluation of the constituent phrases of the composition as regards their relative importance and significance; (3) his æsthetic response to the individual phrase; (4) his response to every tone in the phrase as regards its intonation, duration, intensity, timbre, consonance; (5) his ability to produce the above effects.

The fourth factor is *virtuosity*. Deduced from the expressions of artists, the following specific equipments are the *sine qua non* for an adequate technique: muscular control and co-ordination, speed, accuracy, flexibility, precision (having the right finger in the right place at the right time), unrestrained movements of arm and wrist.

In the above analysis we have a picture, incomplete of course, but nevertheless suggestive of the inherent make-up of the musical mind. The picture tells us definitely that what differentiates the musical genius from mediocrity is not the kind of powers possessed but the degree of the same powers. And what is true of musical genius applies to genius in all the arts.

### 2

#### THE MIND OF GENIUS

Basically genius is an unusually high power of sensory responsiveness to the world of direct immediate impressions. The senses of genius, as has been well said "are not narrow paths, but broad highways whereon march armies of impressions, thronging to the citadel of his mind." With keenness and acuity of sensation genius combines a delicacy of discrimination, of nicety of perception, both together giving the world of direct experience a limitless range, an exhaustless abundance, and above all, a subtle refinement, that is altogether beyond the ken of the more commonplace mind.

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But sensation, no matter how wide in range, is but the cold material of perception. If this material is to become operative, effective, warm, and living, it must become intimately personal. Now it is in the manner of this personification of sensation that the essential trait of genius is recognized. For the ordinary mind the personification is highly prejudiced, interested. The ordinary mind values phenomena only in terms of their meaning to itself. The insistent cry of life is to live, to maintain existence, and experience becomes significant only when, and in the degree to which, it obeys the loud commands of the will to live. The commands can be satisfied only through the environment, and thus the objective world becomes subservient to the subjective world. Life is a standing battle between outer and inner, between the forces of the self and those of the non-self, with the self as the aggressor imposing its will upon its more or less complacent opponent. On the level of existence life ever asks of its surroundings what it can offer for the satisfaction of its need to live, and demands that it yield completely to this need. From this asking and demanding all the values, all the meaning and significance of the outer world are derived. The world has no values apart from its relationship to the exigencies of survival. Life imposes a label of its own making upon all experience, and accepts experience only on the credentials of the label as good or bad, desirable or undesirable, pleasant or unpleasant, to accept or reject what the world has to offer it.

Now the will to live of genius dwells on a plane above that of existence. Genius does not demand of the world, but gives itself to the world. Its self is neither aggressive nor militant. It is participating. It is not hungry for life, but for living. It does not exist by and through experience, but lives in experience. It does not seek, it gives. And because it does not seek but gives, it also finds. It does not seek its self within itself but in the non-self, and therefore finds that which it seeks in great abundance. Genius, in brief, is a state of interested disinterestedness. Because it is disinterested subjectively it is also the more interested objectively. In its detachment

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from its self it becomes attached to the non-self, living in it and not through it. It thus sees clearly face to face and not as through a glass, darkly. The value of the world to genius is inherent, intrinsic, when experience becomes meaningful, significant, in itself, as experience. Its world is therefore not only of wide range due to its sensory endowment, but the perception of that extensive world is profound and penetrating because of its attitude. Experience becomes living, vital, in that it becomes identified with life itself.

It is this trait of genius that gives the quality of livingness to its experiences. Nature becomes alive for it. This trait makes it possible for D. H. Lawrence to write:

It is marvelous weather—brilliant sunshine on the snow, clear as summer, slightly golden sun, distance lit up. But it is immensely cold—everything frozen solid—milk, mustard, everything. Yesterday I went out for a real walk. I've had a cold and been in bed. I climbed with my niece to the bare top of the hills. Wonderful is to see the foot-marks on the snow—beautiful ropes of rabbit prints, trailing away over the brows; heavy hare marks; a fox so sharp and dainty, going over the wall; birds with two feet that hop; very splendid straight advance of a pheasant; wood-pigeons that are clumsy and move in flocks; splendid little leaping marks of weasels, coming along like a necklace chain of berries; odd little filigree of the field-mice; the trail of a mole—it is astounding what a world of wild creatures one feels round one, on the hills in the snow. From the height it is very beautiful. The upland is naked, white like silver, and moving far into the distance, strange and muscular, with gleams like skin. Only the wind surprises one, invisibly cold; the sun lies bright on a field, like the movement of a sleeper. It is strange how insignificant, in all this, life seems. Two men, tiny as dots, move from a farm on a snow-slope, carrying hay to the beasts. Every moment, they seem to melt like insignificant spots of dust. The sheer, living muscular white of the uplands absorbs everything. Only there is a tiny clump of trees bare on the hill-top—small beeches—writhing like iron in the blue sky. I wish one could cease to be a human being, and be a demon. *Allzu menschlich.*<sup>1</sup>

It is also this characteristic of the mind of genius which gives its works their great, superabundant vitality. Carlyle writes of Burns:

<sup>1</sup> *The New Adelphi*, June–August, 1930, pp. 232–283.



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How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The "Daisy" falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident pains, to "thole the sleety dribble, and cranreuch cauld." The "hoar visage" of Winter delights him: he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind*!"<sup>1</sup>

It is in reference to this trait that Carlyle further comments:

The poet, we cannot but think, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavors; its unspeakable aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity: and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every deathbed, though it were a peasant's and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher? then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.<sup>2</sup>

Burns wrote of himself:

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the

<sup>1</sup> *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 1852, A. Hart, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

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enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.<sup>1</sup>

And of Tolstoi Zweig writes:

The fully grown Tolstoy, merging himself with his environment, often does so with an ecstasy which merges on drunkenness. Read how he goes into the forest that he may contemplate the world which has singled him out from among millions to perceive it, to feel it, more intensely and more wittingly than them all; he fills his chest and flings his arms wide, as if he hoped to embrace the infinite. Read how, moved no less strongly by the infinitely small than by the infinitely large, he stoops to smooth out tenderly the leaves of some trampled plant, or with passionate joy he looks at the quivering wings of a dragon-fly; then, since his friends are watching him, he turns his face away lest they should see that his eyes have filled with tears. . . . We understand his extravagant and boastful-seeming assertion: "I myself am nature".<sup>2</sup>

In the stories and writings of Maupassant and Sherwood Anderson we find ample evidences regarding this profound penetrating perception due to the attitude of a disinterested interest. For Maupassant a piece of string lying in the street is pregnant with the significances of human tragedy. In the fine sensorium of Emily Dickinson

. . . every experience was enlarged and the events that might occupy an ordinary person's consciousness for a few moments abided with her for days; a breath became a tornado, and the first buds of March were as tumultuous and overwhelming as the birth of a baby. "To live is so startling," she exclaimed; "it leaves but little room for other occupations." Or, again: "The noise in the pool at noon excels my piano." With this heightened consciousness, the decorous round of household tasks did not impoverish her quick sense of life; they were mingled with the grander visitations of sun and stars, of blue birds and bumblebees and daisies. What seems to us the smooth, polished surface of things is for Emily Dickinson a tempest of mad atoms. Nature was magnified in her consciousness, as it is magnified in the gigantic leaves and buds of Georgia O'Keeffe paintings—and behold! it is another world.

<sup>1</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Adepts in Self-Portraiture*, 1928, The Viking Press, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

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All of Sherwood Anderson's stories and novels are the expressions of a mind that ever reaches out beyond itself to people, streets, houses, sun, and clouds with which he becomes identified, while in his autobiographic writings there are recurrent passages referring to this characteristic of artistic perception. In his *A New Testament* he speaks of the time in which he becomes for a moment a Cæsar, a Napoleon, an Alexander. "If you men who are my friends and those of you who are acquaintances could surrender yourselves to me for just a little while, I tell you what—I would take you within myself and carry you around within me as though I were a pregnant woman."

I have recently thrown out of my  
arms the maiden placed there  
by my father—a liar.  
I sit in a stone chair in a cold  
place.  
I am beset by many pains.  
Pain comes running to me out of  
the bodies of men and  
women.  
I am bred out of the lusts of the  
world.  
I am become the abiding place of  
little lustful thoughts that  
weave in and out of the  
minds of my people.  
It is only to comfort my solitude I  
whisper to myself it is thus  
the new man emerges. It is  
a thought to play with, a ball  
to bounce off the wall. I  
have whispered to myself  
that the new man emerges  
out of the womb of an  
engine, that his birth cry  
arises out of a clangor of  
sounds.  
My thoughts are tossed back and  
forth on a wall.  
As you sit with me you shall be  
compelled to share my fate.

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All you who live in the valley have  
had sticks thrust into your eyes.  
You are shepherds of blind sheep.  
You shall sit in the chair of stone.  
You shall sit in the narrow place.  
You shall be pregnant.  
You shall sit in the stone chair at  
night and the throbbing of  
iron cities shall be in the in-  
tricate veins of your being.  
There are walls of stone.  
There are walls faced with iron.  
Between them you shall sit.

Tales are people who sit on the  
doorstep of the house of my  
mind.  
It is cold outside and they sit wait-  
ing.  
I look out at a window.  
The tales have cold hands.  
Their hands are freezing.  
A short thickly-built tale arises and  
threshes his arms about.  
His nose is red and he has two  
gold teeth.

There is an old female tale sits  
hunched up in a cloak.  
Many tales come to sit for a mo-  
ment on the doorstep and then  
go away.  
It is too cold for them outside.  
The street before the door of the  
house of my mind is filled  
with tales.  
They murmur and cry out, they  
are dying of cold and hunger.  
I am a helpless man—my hands  
tremble.  
I should be sitting on a bench like  
a tailor.  
I should be weaving warm cloth  
out of the threads of thought.  
The tales should be clothed.

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They are freezing on the doorstep  
of the house of my mind.  
I am a helpless man—my hands  
tremble.  
I feel in the darkness but cannot  
find the doorknob.  
I look out at a window.  
Many tales are dying in the street  
before the house of my mind.<sup>1</sup>

From the standpoint of the processes of sensation and perception genius is a high power of responsiveness to the sources of experience in range and penetration. This sensorial and perceptual property of creative mindedness has its effect on the nature and quality of the next higher mental processes of imagery and memory. Because sensations are rich in variety, and percepts intense in significance, the sensations are readily available for recall in great abundance, either as naked images or garbed with the memory of all past events associated with them. And since imagery and memory supply the raw material of imagination their wealth in number and depth of significance determine the quality of the finished product of artistic effort. Fundamentally, then, genius may be defined as a state of mental superabundance, of an over-supply of readily available raw material, making possible a sifting and a resifting, a combining and a recombining, a choosing and rejecting by the various operations of the creative process.

In sum, we find that genius is distinguished constitutionally by a quality of neural organization, a quality of high vigilance of the nervous system, making possible a wide range of sensation, deep perception, and vivid recall. This is the meaning of the statement that genius differs from others not in kind but in degree, that genius can do extremely well what others can do only more or less imperfectly. The genius is not a magician, art works do not drop out of his lap, but are the consequence of senses that are keen, of perceptions that are penetrating, of recall that is quick, sure, and trustworthy, of thought processes that are swift and accurate. The gifts of genius, in

<sup>1</sup> Sherwood Anderson, *The New Testament*, 1927, Horace Liveright.

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the words of Carlyle, "are those that exist with more or less development in every human soul." All of us are alive, but genius is supremely so.

### 3

#### THE PERSONALITY OF GENIUS

The life of the artist has had an interest for the public far above that aroused by other creative workers. In large measure this public prominence of the artist is due to diletantes and amateurs who compensate for lack of genuine creative powers by a display of eccentricity in the name of artistic temperament. There is, however, a closer relationship between the general public and the artist than either the scientist or philosopher. The artist is largely dependent upon public favor and approval for his living, while his works play a not unimportant rôle in the life of the masses. The scientist and philosopher touch us but indirectly, while the artist is an integral part of our habitual existence. He is an intimate member of our family. He visits us in our home and exerts an influence upon us in his books, paintings, music, while we visit him in his domicile in the art gallery, theater, and concert hall, and we encounter him regularly in our industrial and religious activities. Since he is so much part and parcel of our individual and social life we have a personal interest in him. But he is so different from the rest of us in his interests and activities as to appear freakish and abnormal. Our ways do not seem to be his ways, and he bothers and disturbs us. He is one of us, yet remains a stranger among us, attracting undue attention. So we try to explain him by making of him either a divinity or a monster. In days gone by he was an outcast from decent society, today he is being turned into a super-man. He has been variously called a god and madman, above all human standards and beneath everything that is humanly decent, a spoiled child to be tolerated with a mixture of pity and scorn, and an irresponsible adult to be dealt with severely in his transgressions. What is lacking both on the part of his adorers and censors is an understanding of his real

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nature as a human being, of which his peculiar behavior is the outer expression. The peculiarities that have been attributed to him and which need examination are: that he is deficient in intelligence, in reasoning, but unduly emotional or temperamental; that he is weak in character in that he falls a ready victim to drink, drugs, and disease; that he is more mad than sane; that he is more of a child or woman than a man.

Let us inquire into each of these alleged traits of artistic genius in turn.

### 4

#### GENIUS, INTELLIGENCE, AND TEMPERAMENT

We know intelligence only as behavior. There is no meaning to intelligence apart from action, from the manner in which a person adjusts himself to his environment. Man is the most intelligent of organisms because he can adjust himself most adequately to a most complex environment, that is, because he is capable of the most varied behavior. And the most intelligent person is he who can adjust himself most readily and most effectively to the widest variety of complex situations. It is on the basis of the nature of the adjustment that we classify the human family into *normal*, *sub-normal*, and *super-normal*.

The normal person is one who can get along without attracting undue attention, whether favorable or unfavorable. He gets along fairly peacefully and harmoniously with others, can support himself and his dependents without calling for charity, belongs to the right party and the right church, observes conventional morality, at least in public, keeps out of jail, pays his bills, contributes to charity and right social causes, agrees with what is generally accepted and condemns what runs against accepted standards, can keep up with the trend of times fairly well, can meet new conditions if they are not too novel or sudden, is not too aggressive or too cowering, does not agree or disagree too quickly or too violently, but is "reasonable," believes in the greatest good of the greatest

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number, is tactful, willing to compromise for the good of the cause, talks of self-sacrifice and self-denial, is patriotic, loyal, trustworthy, open-minded, tolerant, does not question that the home is the foundation of civilization, capital the backbone of business and prosperity, the church the divinely ordained guardian of morality, the law just and safe, and that virtue is the price he pays for a reward in heaven. He is the good citizen, the backbone of the nation, on whom established institutions can rely for financial and moral support. In brief, the normal person is the average. He falls in readily with the established, customary, old, and slowly and gradually is reconciled to the new.

The sub-normals range from the moron, through the imbecile, to the idiot. These terms designate an increasing lack of mental power to meet those conditions in the environment on which bare physical existence depends. The idiot is so defective mentally as to be unable by himself to take care of his physical needs or to guard himself against ordinary physical dangers. It is unsafe to leave him unprotected, unguarded. The imbecile can look after his physical needs but is incapable of managing himself and his affairs. He can not earn his living by himself. The moron has sufficient mentality to earn a bare living provided conditions are favorable, but can not compete with any sort of success on equal terms with his fellows or manage his affairs with ordinary prudence. He requires care, supervision, constant directions for his own good and for the protection of others, while he is totally helpless in any sort of emergency situation.

The super-normals range from the superior through the talented, to the genius. The mark of the superior person is that he readily adapts himself to new conditions in an adequate manner, and is able and eager to keep up with advanced knowledge in all lines of human interests and activities. He is liberal minded, but not gullible. He is free of prejudices, earnest in his desire for facts, modifies his opinions and actions in accordance with them, and recognizes the authority of those engaged upon a disinterested search for knowledge. He is



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moderate in his judgments and criticisms, accepts no final panaceas for human ills, recognizing that progress is a slow and gradual journey along the endless highway of dispassionate investigation. For him there is no virtue other than knowledge, and no sin but refusal to learn. He finds no particular virtue in the old and established just because it is old, nor in the new merely on the grounds of its novelty, but realizes that without the new the old would stagnate, whereas without the old for its foundation the new is but a wild, empty dream. The superior person is thus the intelligent layman. He may himself not be active in any field of creative endeavor, but he recognizes in the creative worker the greatest benefactor of mankind.

The talented person is a grade above the level of intelligence of the superior man in that he not only appreciates the work of the creator but can understand the fruits of his labor. In the vast army of workers in scientific laboratories, art studios, and academic halls there are extremely few geniuses, but the rest are their co-workers, disciples, treading the pathway blazed by the leaders and charting it. Genius is the spark that sets off the powers of talent into a blaze. The genius of the Newtons, Keplers, and Einsteins of the ages has kindled the lesser lights of scientific talents that populate the laboratories of the world, testing the theoretical products of those supreme minds and applying the results for the conquest of organic and inorganic nature. The genius of the Bachs, the Beethovens, and Wagners is the inspiration of the talented performers who recreate their works for the populace of the civilized world. The genius of the Leonardos, the Raphaels, the Rembrandts, is the light that illumines the steps of the talented painter, sculptor, and architect whose works fill our art galleries and homes. In literature talent takes its model and follows in the footsteps of the Homers, the Dantes, the Shakespeares, and the Keatses supplying us with an endless stream of drama, novel, and poetry. Talent is the legitimate offspring of genius, owing to it not only its life but also whatever merits are found in its work.

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Genius thus stands at the peak of intelligence. It is the advance guard and beacon light of civilization. To the mind of genius we are indebted for all the permanently significant cultural accomplishments of mankind, whether in the arts, sciences, philosophies, or religions. And genius is alike in intellectual power in whatever realm it operates. Artistic genius is no less than scientific genius. There is as much creative energy in a Beethoven symphony, or a Shakespearean drama, as there is in Newton's Laws or Einstein's Theories. Whether artistic or scientific, philosophical or religious, the creative process is alike in nature, and its products equal in value.

### 5

#### ARTISTIC GENIUS AND TEMPERAMENT

Artistic genius is as highly temperamental as it is supremely intelligent. But it does not display any characteristics that are usually implied under "artistic temperament." Genius is not cranky, fussy, sentimental, gushing, soft, careless, eccentric in manners and dress, irresponsible, supercilious, mocking, aggressive, or blasé. These are invariably the signs of the amateurs, dilettantes, pretenders, and poseurs. As Mr. Roger Fry writes, "Most people lead dull, monotonous and conventional lives with inadequate satisfaction of their libido, and one of their favorite phantoms is that of the Bohemian—the gay, reckless, devil-may-care fellow who is always kicking over the traces and yet gets toleration and even consideration from the world by reason of a purely magic gift called genius. Now this creature is not altogether a myth—he or something like him does undoubtedly exist—he frequently practices art, but he is generally a second-rate artist. He may even be a very brilliant and successful one, but he is none the less a very minor artist. On the other hand, almost all the artists who have done anything approaching first-rate work have been thoroughly bourgeois people—leading quiet, unostentatious lives, indifferent to the world's praise or blame, and far too

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much interested in their jobs to spend their time in kicking over the traces.”<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing arbitrary or artificial in temperament any more than in intelligence. Temperament is the affective, emotional background of experience. It not only gives experience its color as pleasant or unpleasant, to be accepted or repulsed, but is the very motive power of action, the energy that drives the organism to react to the environment. An emotionless organism would be a completely inactive one, dead. Emotion is, in fact, what differentiates the living from the non-living. The mark of a non-living body is that all its movements are initiated and controlled by external forces acting upon it. A body is alive, on the other hand, when the force that activates it is generated by and is inherent in the body itself. A non-living body is set in motion by an external force and its reaction is passive, in that the only resistance it offers to the acting force is its own inertia. Its movements are therefore determined not from within itself, but from the outside. In a living body the external agent does no more than set off the inner stored-up energy, which means that its reactions are active, resisting, and hence its movements are to a considerable extent self-determined. Furthermore, this inner energy drives the body to do something, to be astir, to satisfy the drive within it through the environment, so that its reactions are not only active, but also aggressive and selective. Livingness consists thus of active, aggressive, selective movements, to which we apply the term behavior, in contrast to the movements of non-living bodies, which, because they are non-active, non-aggressive, and non-selective, we call motion. And emotion is this inner energy that marks a body as being an organism and not a mechanism.

Now temperament is a general term referring to the constitutional susceptibility of a living body to emotional reaction to its surroundings. Some individuals are more vital, more alive, alert, vigilant, than others. Human beings distribute themselves temperamentally as they do intellectually, below

<sup>1</sup> *The Artist and Psycho-Analysis*, The Hogarth Press, 1924, p. 11.

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and above normal, ranging from the pathologically apathetic, phlegmatic, through the normally interested, to the supremely keen, zestful, and arduous. And it is at this topmost level of temperament, of living energy, that we find artistic genius, just as we found it at the peak of intelligence. From this emotional property of genius there arise several behavior traits that have a profound effect upon its work and its products.

Because genius is so high pitched temperamentally, its reactions to its surroundings are intense, it knows no moderation or neutrality or compromise, but ever alternates between the positive and negative poles of passion, giving the impression of living in two opposing worlds and of being a dual personality. It is greatly repelled or attracted. It loves intensely and hates wholeheartedly. Its judgments know no boundary line. It throws itself into a cause or experience unreservedly, with its whole being, or denounces it with equal fervor. Thus Emil Ludwig can write of Goethe with full justice:

His existence was one long self-contradiction. He was sensual and transcendental, amoral and Spinozaistic, all egotism and all self-surrender, now delighting in companionship, now imperious in his demand for solitude; today religiously, tomorrow cynically, inclined; misanthropic, philanthropic, arrogant and kindly, patient and impatient, sentimental and pornographic, absorbed in form or intent on act, untamed and pedantic, a far-reaching thinker, but an instinctive doer, coldly objective, yet essentially and passionately erratic, entirely masculine yet very feminine—a dual being, if ever there was one: . . .<sup>1</sup>

But this storming, torrential life of genius does not mean a dual personality, a personality split into two alternating, opposing selfs, a sort of Jekyll and Hyde existence, but rather a richly complex personality of which the ingredients are gathered together from the exhaustless variety of human experience. The personality of genius is an epitome of mankind. As it swings between the crest and trough of the wave of life it passes through the center of being of every sort and condi-

<sup>1</sup> Goethe, *The History of a Man*, Putnam, 1928, p. 88.

tion of human existence. Genius is not two-sided nor many-sided, but an all-sided, all-inclusive being, a complex of mankind, a ray of light having within its being all the hues and tints of human experience, a rich tone composed of all the overtones of human emotion.

It is because artistic genius is so fully and completely alive, encompassing in one single life the life of mankind, that we are so greatly impressed with the livingness, truthfulness, and vitality of its works. Each of Shakespeare's characters is a witness not so much to the scope of his interests as to the breadth of his experience. Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello, Iago, Caliban, Touchstone, and Malvolio, are not the psychological speculations of Shakespeare but Shakespeare himself. "Poetry" wrote Kahlil Gibran, "is not an opinion expressed. It is a song that rises from a bleeding wound or a smiling mouth," a pronouncement similar to that of Milton that the man who would write a great poem must first live one, or that of Heine that it was out of his suffering that his songs arose. The bleeding wound and the suffering are the direct results of the passion to live. He who does not venture does not suffer, because he does not know. But out of suffering arises true joy. Opposites feed each other. The anguish of the seeking is compensated for by the joy of discovery, which joy, however, is but the starting point for another higher seeking and suffering. So Heine wrote to a friend, "I hear that you are not happy! That you must sleep off the rapture of your despair! So Schwind writes me. Although it grieves me greatly, it does not astonish me, for that is the lot of almost every sensitive person in this miserable world. And what should we do with happiness, since unhappiness is the only stimulus left us." Despair and rapture, inseparable companions, one the punishment, the other the reward, that genius pays for its endowments, or perhaps, its afflictions. The despair generated by temperament is the spur for the rapture of creation, of imagination.

John Davidson well summarizes the many-sidedness of genius in verse form:

## Art and Beauty

Our ruthless creeds that bathe the earth in blood  
Are moods by alchemy made dogmas of—  
The petrification of a metaphor.  
No creed for me! I am a man apart:  
A mouthpiece for the creeds of all the world;  
A soulless life that angels may possess  
Or demons haunt, wherein the foulest things  
May loll at ease beside the loveliest;  
A martyr for all mundane moods to tear;  
The slave of every passion; and the slave  
Of heat and cold, of darkness and of light;  
A trembling lyre for every wind to sound.  
I am a man set by to overhear  
The inner harmony, the very tune  
Of Nature's heart; to be a thoroughfare  
For all the pageantry of Time; to catch  
The mutterings of the Spirit of the Hour  
And make them known; and of the lowliest  
To be the minister, and therefore reign  
Prince of the powers of the air, lord of the world  
And master of the sea. Within my heart  
I'll gather all the universe, and sing  
As sweetly as the spheres; and I shall be  
The first of men to understand himself. . . .  
And lo! to give me courage comes the dawn,  
Crimsoning the smoky east; and still the sun  
With fire-shod feet shall step from hill to hill  
Downward before the night; winter shall ply  
His ancient craft, soldering the years with ice;  
And spring appear, caught in a leafless brake,  
Breathless with wonder and the tears half-dried  
Upon her rosy cheek; summer shall come  
And waste his passion like a prodigal  
Right royally; and autumn spend her gold  
Free-handed as a harlot; men to know,  
Women to love are waiting everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

### 6

#### GENIUS AND MADNESS

It is because of its intellectual and temperamental nature  
that genius has been so frequently and widely identified with

<sup>1</sup> *A Ballad in Blank Verse*. Used by permission of Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc.

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madness. But genius is not insane, but rather super-sane. The sane person is the safe, practical, hard-headed individual, who keeps his feet as well as his head on solid ground. He is a realist. Life for him is no idle or ideal dream, but a hard fact of duties and obligations to be met, competitors to be fought, social and economic position and honor to be gained, enemies to be hated, and friends to be enjoyed. With Longfellow he murmurs:

Tell me not in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream!—  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us further than to-day.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.

The insane person has departed completely from the world of fact to make his abode in a fictitious realm of his own construction. In his insane condition, whether temporary or permanent, he is altogether a different person from that of his sane state. There is a complete split between what he actually is and what he believes himself to be. He is a completely deluded individual, his delusion constituting for him his true, real self. For the insane, the real is the false and the false the real. He has lost all distinction between the actual and the ideal, the real and the imaginary. He has therefore become unbalanced, irrational, disintegrated, in that his ideal self has become completely severed, split off, from his actual self.

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He does not dream of power, of accomplishment, but in his own mind has attained them. And since there are no factual, realistic bases for what he conceives himself to be, he invents them, thus rationalizing his position. The characteristic of the insane is therefore that he lives a completely rationalized life. The sane person also rationalizes, but only on occasion, and is faintly conscious that he is rationalizing, or can at least be made aware of it. The insane has become the rationalization, and is neither conscious of his delusion nor can he be made conscious of it. He may of his own accord come out of it, but he can not be convinced of it by any external agency.

The super-sanity of genius lies in the fact that the actual world is the raw stuff out of which the ideal world is built, so that while its head is in the skies its feet are planted on solid ground. Genius is practical in its idealism, and ideal in its contact with the practical. Genius does not depart from the actual, but begins with the actual in which it senses the ideal and into which it seeks rationally to transform it. Genius is therefore neither sane nor insane, but sane in its insanity.

But whence the association between genius and insanity? The answer is that, to the sane man, whose attention is totally engrossed by sense perception, the imaginative flights of genius appear as wild dreams, phantoms, delusions, and its labors futile and wasteful. Hence, to such a mind, genius is insane. To genius, the ideal which is evolved from the actual is more real than the actual itself, since in the light of the ideal, the actual is but a drab, shadowy appearance. And the reality of the ideal is the greater as the imagination is more powerful, with the correspondingly increasing unreality and ephemerality of the actual. This is the state that Plato describes as divine madness in figurative, metaphorical language, as the striving of genius for the attaining of the ideal in and through the actual. The sane man, he states "disappears and is nowhere to be found when he enters into rivalry with the madman." Furthermore, as genius "forgets earthly interests and is rapt in the divine, the vulgar deem him mad, and rebuke him; they do not see that he is inspired."



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Thus far I have been speaking of the fourth and last kind of madness, which is imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad. And I have shown this of all inspirations to be the noblest and highest to him who has or shares in it, and that he who loves the beautiful is called a lover because he partakes of it. For, as has been already said, every soul of man has in the way of nature beheld true being; this was the condition of her passing into the form of man. But all souls do not easily recall the things of the other world; they may have seen them for a short time only, or they may have been unfortunate in their earthly lot, and, having had their hearts turned to unrighteousness through some corrupting influence, they may have lost the memory of the holy things which once they saw. Few only retain an adequate remembrance of them; and they, when they behold here any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement; but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no light of justice or temperance or any of the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them; they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and these only with difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

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#### GENIUS, DISEASE, DRINK, AND DRUGS

It has been said that the work of the world is carried on by its invalids. But that is an inverted truth. It has been even claimed that disease, drugs, and alcohol are the sources of creative work, in that they release the dæmon of genius. One writer, for instance, claims that:

If we are challenged to cite from the clinic of life any outstanding proof of the existence of an agency paralyzing inhibitions at propitious times and releasing the spirits that give wings to the soul, or, in other words, setting free creative powers resident in a secondary personality, the following names will be enumerated as witnesses to the power of alcohol: Anacreon, Æschylus, Alcibiades, Cicero, Catullus, Horace, Ovid, Omar, Barbatelli, Tasso, Cervantes, Caracci, Marlowe, Bacon, Jonson, Frans Hals, Thomas Carew, Hobbes, Herrick, Brouwer, Samuel Butler, Cowley, Helius, Jan Steen, Addison, Steele, Parnell, Gay, Handel, Pope, Savage, Swift, Schumann, Gluck, Blackstone, Goldsmith,

<sup>1</sup> *Phædrus*, The Works of Plato, edited by Irwin Edman, Simon and Schuster, 1928, p. 279.

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Churchill, Goethe, Sheridan, Burns, Dussek, Schiller, Schubert, Coleridge, Lamb, Kleist, Hazlitt, Balzac, Tom Moore, De Quincey, Byron, Turner, Mangan, Gerard de Nerval, Poe, Tennyson, Alfred de Musset, Dickens, Kingsley, Whitman, Baudelaire, Murger, Stephen Collins Foster, Rossetti, Swinburne, Verlaine, Guy de Maupassant, Wilde, the Thomsons, Phil May, Richard Le Gallienne, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Andreyev, and James Joyce.

The toxins of tuberculosis have facilitated the release of creative personalities in many notable instances. Again from the great clinic of life we call as witnesses: Saint Francis of Assisi, Calvin, Francis Beaumont, George Herbert, Richelieu, Descartes, Milton, Richard Baxter, Lovelace, Molière, Spinoza, Locke, Watteau, Voltaire, Rousseau, Sterne, Kant, Michael Bruce, Hannah More, Mozart, Henry Headley, Madame de Staël, Bichat, Scott, Jane Austen, Channing, Béranger, Laënnec, Washington Irving, Paganini, von Weber, "Thomas Ingoldsby", Shelley, Joseph Rodman Drake, Keats, Robert Pollok, Tom Hood, George Ripley, Nevin, Hurrell Froude, Kirke White, Hawthorne, John Sterling, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, N. P. Willis, Georges de Guérin, Chopin, Beardsley, Grace Darling, Adelaide Anne Procter, Grace Aguilar, Charlotte Brontë, Thoreau, Kingsley, Ruskin, Rachel, E. P. Roe, Henry Timrod, John R. Green, David Gray, James Ryder Randall, John Addington Symonds, Lanier, George Gissing, Beatrice Harraden, Emerson, Westcott, Bastien-Lepage, Stevenson, H. C. Bunner, Marie Bashkirtseff, Stephen Crane, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Adelaide Crapsey, Katherine Mansfield, Klabund, and Eugene O'Neill.<sup>1</sup>

But the above claim is a confusion of cause and effect, even if it were true that all geniuses suffered ill-health, which, of course, is not the case. There are as many cases of robust health as of ill-health, and it would be just as easy to make out a case for genius as being marked by soundness of body as suffering physical debility. Ill-health, where it exists, is far more the consequence of the possession of genius than a factor in its composition. If genius is physically not up to par it is because in its absorption in creative effort it neglects food, sleep, exercise, and other conditions that promote bodily well-being. It has been well said that everything great is accompanied by pathological manifestations and is therefore taken to be pathological. The pregnant woman, if she were unaware of her condition, would consider every one of

<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Jacobson, *Genius*, Greenberg, 1926, pp. 4-6.

her symptoms as a serious ailment. But these symptoms mean the birth of a child. Likewise the development of mental children involves a disturbance of the normal state, emotional disturbances, disturbances of the nervous system, which do not disappear until the idea is born. He who would renounce artistic or scientific creativeness for the sake of health is like the child who would rather have no teeth than undergo the pain of teething, and he who would designate higher mental activity as abnormal must likewise designate teeth as a disease, since teething is accompanied by pain and fever. And, since the productive person will not cease to think and create, he will not cease to suffer. The autobiographies of our great men speak a very distinct language. It is no exaggeration to speak of health as being an evil. It is certainly not an unconditioned good, and it is demonstrable that suffering and pain are essential companions of spiritual growth. The conclusion is therefore apparent. The average man, or James' "tough-minded," desires health above all, while to the creative-minded bodily health is the least essential. The body is not to stand in the way of fruitful mental work. Mind does not soar when hemmed in by anxiety over every disturbance of bodily well-being. The psycho-pathologies of mental workers could be avoided if these workers would accept medical advice and cease their labors. The customary prescription of the moralist, "banish disease, need, and misery from the world, and you do well," is unpleasantly naïve. In the suffering of the mother man is born, and he is reborn in his own suffering.

The usual pecuniary state of genius and its dependents is similarly a consequence of its pre-occupation with its work. If genius would be as occupied with the accumulation of worldly goods as it is with non-mundane concerns, its economic status would be with that of the world's Midases and its life would be that of a Mæcenas. But the world would pay the price in art treasures, and scientific and social progress. Perhaps it is because of this predominance of self-expression to the disregard of all extrinsic personal consideration that

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genius has been called egotistical. Now it is true that the creator is a monstrous egotist, but not in the sense of selfishness. He is rather unselfish, in that instead of seeking those goods whose acquisition means the despoilation and depredation of others, he is engaged in an enterprise, an adventure of self-development, self-searching, rather than self-seeking, from which there accrue everlasting benefits to mankind. For this one supreme purpose he sacrifices everything that the more common man prizes above all: friendship, family, comfort, position, praise, social approval, and prominence. If in this pursuit of selfishness he is cruel to others, causing suffering even to his family, it must be borne in mind that he is even more cruel to himself as compared with the worldling's peace of mind. If he crushes those intimately associated with him, it is for the larger family of mankind and of posterity. In this sense of egotism Jesus was the greatest of egotists the world has ever seen, for he would acknowledge neither his mother nor brothers, while of his disciples he demanded that they leave home and family, and even let the dead bury the dead. By being essentially true to itself, genius is true not to one or two or many, but to all mankind. In this vein Elie Fauré speculates:

This pitiless need that rises from the depths of the unconscious in order to people the mind with images and give to the will the command to realize them is the true salt of the earth and the food of heroes. I am thinking of the destinies of the majority of the masters, so diverse, but in whom one almost always discovers this fury to experience life through and through, whether one leaves one's flesh behind or takes the flesh of others, in order to follow a phantom which becomes insubstantial the moment one touches it and which, as soon as it has escaped, resumes a fixed form, always the same, always new, never leaving one any rest until one has seized it to experience a brief intoxication and one more disappointment.

I think of Ghirlandajo, weighed down with children and orders, always behind in his work, talking of covering all the walls of Florence with paintings. I think of Signorelli disrobing the corpse of his son in order to paint it, suppressing his tears, his heart contracted in anguish composed of creative fever and sorrow. I think of Tintoretto living in a torment of continuous fecundation, shut up for days and

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nights, painting by lamplight, in order to people convents and churches with the tormented forms that unceasingly germinated in him. I think of Michael Angelo locked up for fifty-four months in the Sistine with his bread and his jug of water, coming out staggering, emaciated, drained dry, blinded by the daylight. I think of Rubens, whose colossal creation cleaves life like the keel of a ship, his pomp, his embassies, his love affairs being nothing but the spray of the wake behind him. I think of Rembrandt leaving everything, success, friendships, fortunes, a method of painting legible to all, to allow ruin, poverty, intoxication perhaps to establish themselves in his household, because one day he had surprised in himself an image of the world that was like nothing but his own self. I think of Poussin refusing the presents of the King of France because he saw every day, on the threshold of his little house on the Pincio, the motives of his emotion renewing themselves for him. I think of Goya, green with fear, suspected by the Inquisition, suspected by the Bourbons, suspected by the French, but rather than not paint with vitriol, peppering the Inquisition with arrows, boxing the ears of the Bourbons, butchering the French. I think of Gros, old and illustrious, pursuing his fugitive form to the very reeds of the Seine and plunging his mouth in the mud in order to drink it there along with death. I think of Constable to whom the verdant humidity of the fields, the growing shoots, the sprouting herbs repeat without ever wearying him: "I am the resurrection and the life." I think of Cézanne, bent over his ungrateful work, deaf to all the sounds of the world, shut up for thirty years among fools, painting like a madman for the relief of the monster whom he feels in himself alone, forgetting his canvas in the fields because he has caught sight of some flame rising before his soul. I think of Renoir, a human ruin, ossified, warped with rheumatism, unable either to get up or lie down and creating incessantly the breasts, the bellies of women, roses and anemones, from the brush fastened to his fist. I think of Hokusai, the "old man mad over drawing," affirming that at the age of one hundred and ten he would at last know how to give life to this point, to this line.

I think of those artisans without genius, the sick Cellini, dragging himself from his bed to cast his pewter vessel into the mold where the bronze of his Perseus was liquefying too slowly, of the poverty-stricken Palissy burning the wood of his floors and furniture in order to heat his plates. I think of all those Italians wandering from city to city, Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Uccello, Gozzoli, Lippi, Piero della Francesca, Pinturicchio, Sodoma, without a roof to cover them, paid by the piece, mad with science and painting, for whom it was a passionate adventure to decorate some little chapel in a forgotten village, as jealous of one another as lovers, exhausting their genius in the effort

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to conquer that clenched their passion about an idea like a hand about a dagger.

I think of those good companions of Flanders or France, setting out on foot for Italy where glittered the golden fleece, painting sign-boards on the way for a living, Fouquet, Breughel, Van der Weyden, Van Orley, Courtois, Mignard, Bourdon, Coypel, Duquesnoy, Puget, Girardou, of the child Callot following a band of gypsies, of Claude Lorrain becoming a cook, then a household servant in order to live there, of Parrocel taken prisoner by pirates while seeking to land there. I think of the engravers of Egyptian hypogeums, making the shadows blossom with feminine forms, palms, shimmering water, of the Chinese or Hindu sculptors scooping out their mountains, peopling their immense caves with their swarming gods. I know very well that in these cases it was the mystic passion that drove them to bury themselves alive or roast themselves in the sunlight on the vertical wall. But is not the search for the incorruptible element that constitutes his inevitable form precisely, even in the atheist, a mystical passion before which all the others are forced to abdicate? Mystical, that is to say, eager to confront a mystery that is common only to himself and God. I think of the confession of Pascal who, after having denounced literary vanity, wonders, if he does not hope that his notes will be found at the bottom of some drawer. The poet must teach men sooner or later that something essential to the development of their quality as men comes from his quality as a man, the only one which belongs to himself alone.<sup>1</sup>

The same holds true of genius and alcohol. Drink and drugs form no inherent part of creativeness, although the creator, because of the nature of his activity, often becomes its ready prey. Burns, Gluck, Poe, Hoffmann, Schubert, de Musset, were strong drinkers. Baudelaire smoked hashish, De Quincey opium, others used arsenic, cocaine, chloral. Maupassant relates that every line of *Pierre et Jean* was written under the influence of ether. From these and other similar cases the superficial deduction is readily made that Bacchus and Gambrinus are the gods who bestow the rewards of inspiration upon those who serve them well. But it is far more plausible that genius turns to drink and drugs for artificial stimulation because of the strenuous demands of constant creative labor and nervously exhausting intensity of continuous mental

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of the Forms*, Harpers, 1930, pp. 209-213.

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effort, as well as for the solace of forgetfulness from the suffering imposed by life upon those who would taste of it to its bitter dregs. And it is not at all improbable that those among the creators who have resorted to such artificial stimulants, instead of finding a reward therein, have paid the penalty for their weakness in inferior quality of work. Alcohol and other drugs paralyze the brain and weaken its controlling and directing powers, with the result that experience normally kept in check rushes in riotous manner to the surface like prisoners escaping jail confinement. But it is not imagination that is operating under such conditions but unrestrained fancy, wild, incoherent, and inconsequential imagery. One must therefore stretch many a point to substantiate a claim that "whole works of consummate power and masterful consistency have been produced under the inspiration of alcohol." Poe and De Quincey may have, and no doubt did, utilize the imagery provoked by alcohol and opium, but they were able to turn that material into works of power because they were artists when sober. Their works suffered rather than profited from their addiction, in that the subject-matter of many of their products is gruesome, morbid, and grotesque. Goethe remarked to Eckermann that "Schiller never drank much, he was very moderate; but in moments of bodily weakness he sought stimulants in liquor. The practice however interfered with his health and harmed his productivity. For what the wise critics find exception to in his work I trace to this cause. All such parts, of which they say are not *just*, I call pathological parts, in that he wrote them on those days when he lacked strength, in order to find the true motives." Emerson, in commenting on the "bards' love of wine, mead, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium, the fumes of sandalwood and tobacco, or whatever other species of animal exhilaration," writes that:

These are auxiliaries to the centrifugal tendency of a man, to his passage out into free space, and they help him to escape the custody of that body in which he is pent up, and of that jail-yard of individual relations in which he is inclosed. Hence a great number of such as were professionally expressors of Beauty, as painters, poets, musicians

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and actors, have been more than others wont to lead a life of pleasure and indulgence; all but the few who received the true nectar; and, as it was a spurious mode of attaining freedom, as it was an emancipation not into the heavens, but into the freedom of baser places, they were punished for that advantage they won by a dissipation and deterioration. But never can any advantage be taken of nature by a trick. The spirit of the world, the great calm presence of the Creator, comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body. That is not an inspiration which we owe to narcotics, but some counterfeited excitement and fury.

In a very similar vein to that of Emerson, John Milton wrote to Charles Diodati:

. . . Festivity and poetry are surely not incompatible. . . . One sees the triple influence of Bacchus, Apollo and Ceres, in the verses you have sent me. And, then, have you not music—the harp lightly touched by nimble hands, and the lute giving time to the fair ones as they dance in the old tapestried room? Believe me, where the ivory keys leap, and the accompanying dance goes round the perfumed hall, there will the Song-god be. But let me not go too far. Light Elegy is the care of many gods, and calls any one of them by turns to her assistance—Bacchus, Erato, Ceres, Venus, and little Cupid besides. To poets of this order, therefore, conviviality is allowable; and they may often indulge in draughts of good old wine. *But the man who speaks of high matters—the heaven of the full-grown Jove, and pious heroes, and demi-god leaders of men, the man who now sings the holy counsels of the gods above, and now the subterranean realms guarded by the fierce dog—let him live sparsely, after the manner of the Samian master; let herbs afford him his innocent diet, let clear water in a beechen cup stand near him, and let him drink sober draughts from a pure fountain! To this be there added a youth chaste and free from guill, and rigid morals, and hands without a stain. Being such, thou shalt rise up, glittering in sacred raiment and purified by lustral waters, an augur about to go into the presence of the un-offended gods.* So is wise Tiresias said to have lived, after he had been deprived of his sight; and Theban Linus; and Calchas the exile; and old Orpheus. So did the scantily-eating, water-drinking Homer carry his hero Ulysses through the monster-teeming hall of Circe, and the straits insidious with the voices of the Syrens, and through thy courts, too, O infernal King, where he is said to have held the troops of shades enthralled by libations of black blood. For the poet is sacred and the priest of the gods; and his breast and his mouth breathe the indwelling Jove.



### GENIUS, THE CHILD, AND THE WOMAN

Genius has also been compared to the child and the woman.

Regarding genius and the child, we must draw a distinction between childish and childlike. Genius is not childish, but childlike in its attitude towards experience. The child's attitude is that of a disinterested interest, in contrast with that of the interested interest of the adult. The child is avid for experience, throwing itself into it with complete abandon and spontaneity. The adult is calculating, scheming, selfish, experience having no value as such, but only in what it can yield in satisfaction of some consciously felt need or desire. The child-likeness of genius lies precisely in this impractical outlook on its surroundings, an attitude so vividly described by Schopenhauer.

Thus genius is the faculty of continuing in the state of pure perception, of losing oneself in perception, and of enlisting in this service the knowledge which originally existed only for the service of the will; that is to say, genius is the power of leaving one's own interests, wishes, and aims entirely out of sight, . . . and with sufficient consciousness, to enable one to reproduce by deliberate art what has thus been apprehended, and "to fix in lasting thoughts the wavering images that float before the mind." It is as if, when genius appears in an individual, a far larger measure of the power of knowledge falls to his lot than is necessary for the service of an individual will; and this superfluity of knowledge, being free, now becomes subject purified from will, a clear mirror of the inner nature of the world. This explains the activity, amounting even to disquietude, of men of genius, for the present can seldom satisfy them, because it does not fill their consciousness. This gives them that restless aspiration, that unceasing desire for new things, and for the contemplation of lofty things, and also that longing that is hardly ever satisfied, for men of similar nature and of like stature, to whom they might communicate themselves; whilst the common mortal, entirely filled and satisfied by the common present, ends in it, and finding everywhere his like, enjoys that peculiar satisfaction in daily life that is denied to genius.<sup>1</sup>

The common mortal, that manufacture of Nature which she produces by the thousand every day, is, as we have said, not capable,

<sup>1</sup> *The World as Will and Idea*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1891, Vol. I, pp. 240-241.

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at least not continuously so, of observation that in every sense is wholly disinterested, as sensuous contemplation, strictly so-called is. He can turn his attention to things only so far as they have some relation to his will, however indirect it may be. Since in this respect, which never demands anything but the knowledge of relations, the abstract conception of the thing is sufficient, and for the most part even better adapted for use; the ordinary man does not linger long over the mere perception, does not fix his attention long on one object, but in all that is presented to him hastily seeks merely the concept under which it is to be brought, as the lazy man seeks a chair, and then it interests him no further. This is why he is so soon done with every thing, with works of art, objects of natural beauty, and indeed everywhere with the truly significant contemplation of all the scenes of life. He does not linger; only seeks to know his own way. Thus he makes topographical notes in the widest sense; over the consideration of life itself as such he wastes no time. The man of genius, on the other hand, whose excessive power of knowledge frees it at times from the service of will, dwells on the consideration of life itself, strives to comprehend the Idea of each thing, not its relations to other things; and in doing this he often forgets to consider his own path in life, and therefore for the most part pursues it awkwardly enough. While to the ordinary man his faculty of knowledge is a lamp to light his path, to the man of genius it is the sun which reveals the world. This great diversity in their way of looking at life soon becomes visible in the outward appearance both of the man of genius and of the ordinary mortal. The man in whom genius lives and works is easily distinguished by his glance, which is both keen and steady, and bears the stamp of perception, of contemplation. This is easily seen from the likenesses of the few men of genius whom Nature has produced here and there among countless millions. On the other hand, in the case of an ordinary man, the true object of his contemplation, what he is prying into, can be easily seen from his glance, if indeed it is not quite stupid and vacant, as is generally the case. Therefore the expression of genius in a face consists in this, that in it a decided predominance of knowledge over will is visible, and consequently there also shows itself in it a knowledge that is entirely devoid of relation to will, i. e., *pure knowing*. On the contrary, in ordinary countenances there is a predominant expression of will; and we see that knowledge comes into activity only under the impulse of will, and thus is directed merely by motives.<sup>1</sup>

Really every child is to a certain extent a genius, and the genius is to a certain extent a child. The relationship of the two shows itself primarily in the naïveté and sublime simplicity which is characteristic

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 243-244.

of true genius; and beside this it appears in several traits, so that a certain childishness certainly belongs to the character of the genius. In Riemer's "Mittheilungen uber Goethe" (vol. 1., p. 184) it is related that Herder and others found fault with Goethe, saying he was always a big child. Certainly they were right in what they said, but they were not right in finding fault with it. It has also been said of Mozart that all his life he remained a child (Nissen's Biography of Mozart, pp. 2 and 529). Schlichtegroll's "Nekrology" (for 1719, vol. ii., p. 109) says of him: "In his art he early became a man, but in all other relations he always remained a child." Every genius is even for this reason a big child; he looks out into the world as into something strange, a play, and therefore with purely objective interest. Accordingly he has just as little as the child that dull gravity of ordinary men, who, since they are capable only of subjective interests, always see in things mere motives for their actions. Whoever does not to a certain extent remain all his life a big child, but becomes a grave, sober, thoroughly composed, and reasonable man, may be a very useful and capable citizen of this world; but never a genius. In fact, the genius is so because that predominance of the sensible system and of intellectual activity which is natural to childhood maintains itself in him in an abnormal manner through his whole life, thus here becomes perennial. A trace of this certainly shows itself in many ordinary men up to the period of their youth; therefore, for example, in many students a purely intellectual tendency and an eccentricity suggestive of genius is unmistakable. But nature returns to her track; they assume the chrysalis form and reappear at the age of manhood, as incarnate Philistines, at whom we are startled when we meet them again in later years. Upon all this that has been expounded here depends Goethe's beautiful remark: "Children do not perform what they promise; young people very seldom; and if they do keep their word, the world does not keep its word with them." (*Wahlverwandtschaften*, Pt. i., ch. 10)—the world which afterwards bestows the crowns which it holds aloft for merit on those who are the tools of its low aims or know how to deceive it. In accordance with what has been said, as there is a mere beauty of youth, which almost every one at some time possesses (*beauté du diable*), so there is a mere intellectuality of youth, a certain mental nature disposed and adapted for apprehending, understanding, and learning, which every one has in childhood, and some have still in youth, but which is afterwards lost, just like that beauty. Only in the case of a very few, the chosen, the one, like the other, lasts through the whole life; so that even in old age a trace of it still remains visible; these are the truly beautiful and the men of true genius.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 163-169.

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The notion that the mind of artistic creative genius resembles that of the woman arises from a misconception as to the real nature of the female mentality. Popular opinion notwithstanding, it is not the female who is idealistically, imaginatively inclined, but the male. It is the man who has idealized the woman, not the woman the man. There are few great love poems written by women in glorification of the man, while the literature of the world is replete with idealizations of woman by man. What the male has done—and this is an indication of his imaginative nature—is to turn the essentially factual, realistic-minded woman into his ideal, has made her into his art work, a rôle which she gladly accepts and enacts with all the skill and astuteness characteristic of the practical nature. No woman idealizes a man. She loves him, when she does not merely use him, for what he actually is. He loves her for what he makes out of her. And she encourages him in his idealization of her because it serves her realistic purpose to have control over his roving, romantic, unquiet, restless disposition. The male grows weary of one female in propinquity unless she shows unusual skill in deliberately developing a many-sided personality or is naturally endowed with it, while the female chooses, when she can, and when she is wise, the not too brilliant male as a guarantee of steadiness and constancy. It is the male who strains at the leash of marriage, hungry for further adventures with the new and untried, which in turn loses their glamour and fascination soon after they have been attained.

Historically the female is a negligible factor in the imaginative realm. She has almost no place in the sciences, arts, philosophies, and religions, in a word, in creative endeavor. And this fact can not be altogether ascribed to limitation of opportunity, for genius is not a matter of occasion but of endowment. Genius is not an accident. It does not wait for opportunities, advantages, and favors. It fights its way against all odds or obstructions. But even if creative attainment were principally dependent on opportunity, the predominance of the male in the arts is an indication of his imaginative status as

compared with the female. A woman of outstanding accomplishment in any one of the arts is a most rare phenomenon, in spite of the fact that by far more women than men take up the study of music, painting, or acting in youth, although the support of these arts, as is evidenced from the composition of audiences at theaters, concerts, and art galleries, is maintained principally by the supposed-to-be weaker sex. The woman often shows marked talent in these arts, but rarely, if ever, genius.

That it is the male rather than the female who is the unpractical is shown even among animals, savages, and the state of those occupations of civilized peoples on which depends the sustenance of life. Among savages the woman supports the family while the male plays at hunting or war, or sits in solemn council regarding affairs of state. With civilized peoples, industry, politics, and war are games or adventures, and the male objects to the female's entrance into these mainly on the ground that she would spoil his games by turning them into the drab business of national housekeeping. Had the management of the practical affairs of the world been left to geniuses history would relate a tale of great dreams and utter disasters. It is the female mentality of the so-called common man, with his nose to the grindstone of physical existence, that is keeping the world safe and sane, with an occasional spur from genius to keep him from resting too long on the oars of existence. The average man is the real male counterpart of the true, normal female, and it is in the degree to which he deviates from this norm in the direction of creativity that he approximates the true male.



## CHAPTER V

### ART AND THE ARTIST

We should now be in a position to make a deduction regarding the specific nature of the art work from the standpoint of its creator. It is very probable, however, that we lost the thread of our investigation in the mass of details, so we had better first make a brief review of our findings.

We started out by asking the art work to tell us what it was as a finished product. From several definitions of art by artists we deduced an hypothesis that a product is not an art work just because it is a literal reproduction of some object or occurrence, no matter how perfectly executed, nor is a product an art work simply in that it presents us with something completely opposed to what we know to be actually true in the form of a fantastic, rhapsodic dream. This hypothesis we proceeded to test out by the evidences of personal experience and historical perspective. The question then arose: If the art work is neither skillful representation of ordinary experience, nor its reversal, what is it? The examination of this question revealed to us that there are certain minds whose unique trait is a mental power of sensing in the ordinary, familiar, and impersonal aspect of the world, the presence of something highly distinctive and personal, an ideal, perfect something, of which the actual is an imperfect and incomplete manifestation, and the art work is the result of the striving of such a mind to evoke the ideal dormant in the actual by using the actual as its medium. The actual is thus but the raw material for the ideal, into which it becomes transformed in the finished art work. From these considerations we formulated a definition of an art work as a unique presentation, or expression, of a unique experience by a unique mind.

This very general, and therefore vague, definition stimulated the further and crucial question as to the nature of the

unique experience, the unique expression and the unique mind. This question led us to an analysis of the creative process and the creative mind.

It is in the nature of the creative process and what it tells us about the creative mind that the specific nature and significance of the art work is revealed. The creative process tells us that the mental impulse for the art work is not a set plan or scheme to produce something. The creator is not primarily engaged in producing or acquiring something. He is principally engrossed in living, and what he produces or acquires is the by-product of this pre-occupation. Such living is on a level other than that of ordinary existence. The ordinary man lives by producing and acquiring. Production and acquisition are his objectives, and the more that he produces and acquires the more satisfactorily does he live. His life is a scheme of begetting and getting. For him life is a business, a transaction. He buys himself by selling himself. He gives in order to get. Whatever life means for him depends on what he can acquire through that which he produces. His product is not the result of living, but the condition for living. Such is the man on the practical level of life, the man of the world, calculating, scheming, planning to gain life by the deliberate conquest of his environment.

The life of the creative mind is the reverse of the practical mind, and the values of the creative product are also the reverse of the values of practical goods.

α The imaginative life finds its satisfactions within itself. It does not depend for its life upon external things, but it uses the external as the raw stuff, the food for the nourishment of its internal being. It seeks not the possession of goods, but the discovery of itself, the finding of the self in the non-self. It therefore does not calculate or scheme how to overcome its environment, but lends itself fully, completely, and spontaneously, to experience in an attitude of disinterested interest. Being disinterested in its interest, it is not aggressive towards that which promotes or hinders its practical welfare, nor indifferent to that which offers neither aid nor

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obstruction. It neither selects nor rejects. It lives. Everything about and around it is food for the enrichment of its inner life. It digests what is suitable, and rejects what is unsuitable. But both digestion and rejection are spontaneous, so that genius, by losing itself in experience, finds itself therein. By standing over the world, questioning it, prying into it, one may discover principles and laws. By yielding oneself to the world, permitting it to enter into one, one discovers one's being. We find our identity by finding the identity of others. By standing off from things we shut the very doors that would give us entrance to the essential nature of the thing we would know. When we gain entrance into the essential being of one thing we obtain a glimpse of the unity of all things, and it is only by partaking of the life of the whole that we can know our own life. But such a vision can not be caught by standing off from the world and calculating its meaning in terms of some immediate or prospective need, but by standing in with the world and partaking of its intimate life.

The mystery of the imaginative life is the mystery of selfhood—the mystery of all true growth. It is a development from inside out, an unfolding, a revealing. The seed sprouts, sends its roots into the soil for nourishment, and in due time its bloom, flowers, and fruit reveal in the actual that which it contained potentially in its dormant original state. All true being is an unfolding of the inner in and through the outer. (The imaginative life explores its soil, its external world, feeds and grows upon it, and reveals the stages of its growth in its fruits, the art work.) That is the meaning of the whole creative process from preparation to execution. It is a continuous process of self-searching, self-discovery, and self-revelation—the seed of selfhood unfolding, finding itself through the non-self. Genius grows as does the oak from the acorn. All true growth is spontaneous, unconscious; all forced growth distorts, stunts, and stultifies potentialities by arbitrary, external impositions, a process of clogging up instead of letting out. The truth, the genuineness, the reality, the author-



ity, we feel in some art works is the truth of selfhood developing in a normal, natural manner. The lack of these qualities in other art products, their artificiality, often their freakishness, their immaturity, their one-sidedness, the feeling they give us of something lacking, is a lack of genuine selfhood in their creator. The true artist, the full, natural self, dwells in the art work as does the seed in its flowering. "The author," wrote Flaubert, "should be in his work as God is in the Universe, present everywhere, and visible nowhere." It is not so much that the author should be in his work, as that if he is true and genuine, he is in his work, for his work is himself. And since his work is himself, because he is present everywhere in it, he is visible nowhere. The visible is always the partial, the incomplete, the whole is always experiential. With the eye we see only the parts of a painting, with the ear we hear no more than the single successive tones of a melody. The whole, the unit, is neither visible nor audible. Thus the tones of a melody are present everywhere, but audible nowhere, for let one fix his attention on the single tones and the melody disappears. Since the art work is the consummation of the vital growth of its creator, presenting him in what he was as a whole, as a personality, when he executed it, he is visible in it nowhere, just because he is present in it everywhere.

"The less one feels a thing," wrote Flaubert, "the more fitted one is to express it as it is—as it is always in itself, in its general aspect, and freed from all contingencies of the moment." What Flaubert should have said is that the less one feels, not the things, but one's own personal, conscious interests of the moment, the more one is free to feel, to experience, the thing, and therefore one is the more fitted to express the thing as it is in itself. Commonly, as practical beings, we do not express a thing, but ourselves through the thing. Our needs interpose themselves between us and things as they are in their essential nature. As Bergson puts it: "We do not see the actual things themselves, in most cases we confine ourselves to reading the labels affixed to them. This tendency,

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the result of need, has become even more pronounced under the influence of speech; for words—with the exception of proper nouns—all denote genera. The word, which only takes note of the most ordinary function and commonplace aspect of the thing, intervenes between it and ourselves, and would conceal its form from our eyes, were that form not already marked beneath the necessities that brought the word into existence. Not only external objects, but even our own mental states, are screened from us in their inmost, their personal aspect, in the original life they possess.” We do not feel things, as much as ourselves through the things, the degree to which things aid or hamper the fulfillment of the needs we seek to satisfy. And the more we feel our needs the less we can feel the things as they are in themselves, their inherent truth and vitality. Things can not enter into us and we into things in this attitude, for it is a war, a battle, in which the issue is to conquer or be conquered. In this battle of necessity we never *are*, we only *do*. The life of biological survival is an ever becoming and a never being. In attaining and reaching we never attain or reach. Hence we are never complete, fulfilled, for we are constantly engaged in completing and fulfilling. In striving to overcome for the sake of ourselves we lose the self we are striving for. But there is a striving which is at the same time an attaining. As the seed is growing, striving, it is also attaining. In becoming it is also being. In reaching it is also grasping. And what it is grasping is not external to itself, but internal to itself. In striving for the self we are also attaining the self. We are as we become. Being is realizing itself in becoming, so that there is being in becoming. All inner growth is a being in becoming. Such growth is spontaneous, natural. Instead of holding itself in, it lets itself go. And because it lets itself go it finds nourishment in all it touches. It becomes what it touches, and what touches it is absorbed into itself. Because it yields it also conquers. Because it gives it also is given. Yielding itself freely and wholly to experience, experience yields itself freely and wholly. Life thus feeds life in mutual coöperation.

Such is the imaginative life in contrast with the practical life. Because the imaginative life does not strain to conquer the outer, it is free to attain the inner. In its emancipation from the non-self it reaches the self. Slavery to the outer kills the inner. In trying to save our soul we lose it. In gaining the world one loses the very values the world has to bestow. By forcing one drives away the very thing one would possess. By pursuing one misses what is being pursued, mistaking the means for the end. Life's treasures can not be whipped into line, but fall into line by mutual attraction. To him that gives is also given, while from him who would only be given even that which he has is taken away. The way of the imagination is that of spontaneous giving and spontaneous finding. The creative process is not a conscious search. The creator is not out to find anything or prove anything. What develops in the process of preparation—incubation—and comes to fruition in inspiration is no different from the bud bursting into blossom, presaging the fruit to be harvested. The fruit of the creative process, the art work, is then no arbitrary product, planned in accordance with some preconceived purpose. It is rather a milestone in the growth of a significant personality, a record of an attainment in living.

Much of what has been said and written about genius and inspiration, both in praise and disparagement, is part truth and part falsehood just because it is praise or disparagement. What is needed is understanding. The art work is supposed, on the one hand, to come like a lightning bolt from a clear sky, as a sudden inspiration, a divine ordination, on the other, to be the result of labor and perspiration. Genius, at one extreme, is a charmer for the daemon, at another, a capacity for taking pains, ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration. But neither perspiration nor inspiration account for the art work. There are any number of individuals who feel inspired and perspire, but what they produce—when they do produce—resembles nothing more than the mountain that labored and brought forth a mouse. The rôle of inspiration and perspiration in the creative activity is worthy of

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careful scrutiny for the sake of an understanding of the art work.

An art work comes into being neither by inspiration alone nor perspiration alone, but by sustained, hard effort, initiated and directed by a compelling idea. The crucial test of an idea is its driving power, while its driving power depends on the background of experiences that have given rise to it. The life span of an idea or inspiration is in proportion to its period of gestation. Fancies, whims, caprices, and fads die as quickly as they are born. There is no life to them because there is no life in them. Their immature birth presages a premature death. The sudden bloom dies a-borning. Of such stuff are the fancies of the mind, and they are easily and eagerly mistaken for imagination. But there is nothing fanciful or spasmodic about the imagination. (The mill of the creative mind grinds slowly, and because it grinds slowly it also grinds fine.) The imagination does not blow hot and cold. It gathers heat slowly, and when the heat bursts into flame, it burns with a steady and lasting light, fed by the rich sources that have given it life.

Such is the mind of genius. What its imagination bodies forth in the stage of inspiration is not a phantom, or fancy, but an idea of substance and significance, a fruit emerging by a long process of growth and maturation out of a rich variety of warm personal experiences. There is nothing sudden or flash-like in inspiration. It is rather a discovery following a long period of arduous adventuring and exploring in the wilderness of selfhood. Each inspiration is a landmark in the journey of self-discovery as well as a beacon light for the next stage of the journey towards self-fulfillment. It contains both joy and sorrow, the joy of reaching and the sorrow of not grasping, of fulfilling, yet falling short of fulfillment.

"The raptures of creative activity," exclaims one writer, "empty words invented by men who never had an opportunity of judging from their own experience. At the best, the maker finds himself confronted with a formless, meaningless, usually obstinate and stiff matter, which yields reluctantly to form.

. . . Creative activity is a continual progressing from failure to failure, and the condition of the creator is usually one of uncertainty, mistrust, and shattered nerves. For that reason even men of genius can not keep up the creative activity to the last. As soon as they have acquired their technique, they begin to repeat themselves, well aware that the public willingly endures the monotony of a favorite, even finds virtue in it. . . . He who has once been through the creative rapture is not easily tempted to try again."

But is this a true account of creative activity? The maker does find himself confronted with obstinate material, but what about the joy of the victory in conquering it? Can there be any real joy unless derived from the conquest of obstructions? And is not every failure of creative effort an accomplishment, a triumph in progress towards greater perfection and a spur, an invitation, for the next step in higher attainment? Can there be recognition of accomplishment without the realization of failure? Each art work is a failure, but is it not also therefore a triumph, for he who does not realize failure has ceased growing. Each art work is therefore a record of a triumphant failure, triumphant as an actual achievement, a failure as a potential achievement. The true artist is ever disappointed with what he has done, for his reach always exceeds his grasp, the ideal is ever beyond the actual. But the actual is ever striving towards the ideal, and it is precisely the mark of men of genius that they do keep up creative activity to the last, each of their works being a unique product instead of a duplication. Genius never acquires a set technique. It is not interested in manual dexterity, nor has it any direct concern with the public. It is not producing marketable goods. There is no repetition of technique in Shakespeare, Goethe, or Beethoven. Each work stands on its own feet, and is a law unto itself. Its technique is its own, evolved by the necessity of its own being. No preconceived formula is recognizable in it. Each bears the stamp of creative rapture, of the conquest of a new world of experience, of an adventure and discovery in self-realization.

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The herculean labors of genius—that stage of the creative process that has given rise to the consoling idea that genius is a minimum of inspiration and a maximum of perspiration—arises at the demand of the raptures of creative activity. The new-born mental child demands an appropriate habitation and a name. Its demands are exacting. The specifications for its abode are finely drawn and minute in detail. It is the severest of taskmasters and strictest of disciplinarians. The parent may protest, revolt, threaten, revile, and even disclaim or abandon his offspring. But if he would rear it he must do so at its own terms, even at the cost of anguished days, sleepless nights, and shattered nerves. It will be neither forced nor driven, but must lead and direct. It issues commands for its own rearing, and unless obeyed, prefers destruction to distortion.

Genius therefore labors. But its labors are for the sake of giving material form to the substance of imagination. Imagination stirs genius to labor by setting a goal that can be attained only by intensive and prolonged physical and mental effort. The imagination is the driving power of the labor, while the intensity and persistency of the effort is the test of the authenticity of the imagination. The imagination is authentic only when that which is bodied forth in inspiration is demonstrated to be a truth and not a phantom by the results of the labor of execution. On the other hand, the labor is creative only when the hand and head of the worker are urged along by a creative idea. Without such an urge labor is a deadly routine. The creative element in labor is directly derived from the creative idea. In the process of execution the creative worker becomes familiar with his brain-children. In their original form, as ideas, they are strangers to him. He gets to know them only as he watches them develop under his hand. Some of them he discovers to be imposters or weaklings, to be discarded, others genuine visitations to be carefully nourished into maturity, still others to be more promising than they originally appeared to be. It is through labor that the creative worker learns to know himself as a creator

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by becoming intimately acquainted with the real nature of his mental offspring.

Furthermore, since each brain-child requires its own mode of handling, an environment suited for its own particular needs, the creative worker also becomes familiar in the course of his labors with his growing powers as a craftsman, how well he can cope with the continuous demands of creative effort. This is the ultimate test of the artist as a creator. If he stops growing as a craftsman and settles down to a routine execution, he is through as an artist, and becomes an artisan.

The art work is then a product of neither inspiration nor perspiration, but of inspired labor. Inspiration without labor is self-deception, a delusion. Nothing of more than transitory significance for mankind has ever been produced by labor alone, while armies of individuals have been clogging up the machinery of progress with loud claims of divinely inspired utterances, but whose very loudness is an indication of the sources of emptiness from which it emanates. All true inspiration is of the nature of self-discovery following upon the unconscious but severe labor of imaginative adventure in living, and resulting in the conscious toil of testing the truth of the discovery in the act of execution. Every art work is a measure of a man as artist and craftsman. It is a revelation of himself to himself. Through it he finds out what he is and who he is. It is the objective evidence of his past being and a forecast of his future becoming.

It is told of Robert Browning that on receiving an inquiry from a club regarding the meaning of one of his poems he replied that when he wrote it he and God knew what it meant, but that now only God knew. The artist can no more give a reason for his works than he could for his life. His work is his life and his reason for living. He presents his reason for living, the meaning of his life, in what he produces. All that can be said about an art work is that here a man has lived. And that is saying everything, for life is its own reason for being. When we say that a value is non-rational we are labeling it as fundamental, basic, vital. In their essential nature

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things are what they are for no other reason than that they are what they are. By reason we can establish what they are, but not why they are what they are. When reason attempts more than an answer to the *what* of things, it is no longer reason but rationalization. Reason does not establish the truth of anything, for the truth is already there. What it can do is reveal whether or not we possess the truth of things. By rationalization we hide the truth. By reason we draw it forth, reveal it unto ourselves. And that is what the artist does. In his art work he reveals the truth that is in him. And his revelation is rational, in that it is orderly, systematic, a harmonious whole. By reason he assures himself of the truth of his imagination. But the truth that is in him, the truth bodied forth by his imagination, is non-rational. The rational is ever but the means for presenting, expressing, giving utterance to, the non-rational. There is no such thing as giving reasons. We never give reasons for anything. We only seek for justifications. And whatever is in need of justification is already condemned by that very need. The so-called proofs for the existence of God are no proofs at all, but substitutes for the absence of a personal experience of God. That is left to the theologian. But the religious genius does present in a rational manner the God that dwells in him. He is rational because he is non-rational. His rationality grows out of his non-rationality. The truth that is in him drives him to seek adequate expression of it, and the adequate expression is his assurance of the truth that is in him. The art work is the rational presentation of the non-rational, which means that it is a truthful expression of an experience that is of the very stuff of life itself.

The creative impulse has been traced by many writers to have a social origin, as arising from the desire to communicate to others what the artist experiences. Without a public for his works, we are told, the artist would have no urge to create. In accordance with this view, the artist is a showman, and art a means for exhibitionism and self-display. There is no doubt but that much of what passes for art at any given



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time is motivated by nothing more than a craving for public favor. But to attribute the herculean labors and sufferings of the creative minds of the ages to such a trite purpose indicates a most naïve conception of the nature of human experience and a disregard, to say the least, of the records of artistic history.

The activities of living organisms are anything but arbitrary, and that of human beings the least so. The motives of human experience are ever internal in origin, with the external as the medium through which they operate and seek satisfaction. An organism uses its environment for its own inherent purposes. It is never used by it. Its activities have no purpose other than the expression of itself and for the sake of itself. Every act of a living body, from amoeba to man, begins internally, with an urge for living, and is completed internally with the urge pacified. Its reach for the outer is initiated, directed, and controlled, by the inner. Life is not the adjustment of inner to outer, but rather the utilization of the outer by the inner in the interest of the inner. An organism never reacts twice to the same situation in precisely the same way, indicating that the situation, though exerting an influence on experience, is not its determining factor. The organism seeks stimuli, makes different selections from among them at different times, and reacts to them in a manner suited to the needs of a particular occasion.

The creative genius, above all living forms, is imbued with the urge to live. Mentally and temperamentally his is an enhanced existence. He is relentlessly driven by the life within him to seek profounder experiences by penetrating more and more deeply into the substance of the world about him, for the greater enrichment of his own life. What he gives to the public, and what the public most often rejects, at least temporarily, is the consequence, the evidence, the record, of his development in self-discovery. He does not produce in order to live. He produces because he lives. He is not a tradesman. He does not have his eye on the market, nor does he seek the favor or goodwill of the populace. Whatever public

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favor his works attract is accidental and welcome. But public disfavor, even condemnation, never swerves him from his purpose. The records of artistic endeavor throughout the ages tell a continuous story of genius bearing with magnificent fortitude not only public indifference and neglect, but braving savage criticism. If art were actuated by a desire to please, if the creative impulse depended on social approval, if art were no more than communication, then artistic mediocrity would be triumphant and genius eradicated. But history bears certain witness that what is most popular at any epoch is also most subject to the ravages of time, and what is most savagely denounced is often also most permanent. Genius is denounced precisely because it will not pander to popular tastes. And it will not do so simply because it can not do so. Its very life is to create, not to reproduce. Reproduction is the province of talent, not of genius. What the public wants is what it has become accustomed to. Hence, what genius produces at any time the public gets to accept in due time as it becomes adapted to it. The rejected of today becomes the accepted of tomorrow. Genius does not flaunt the public nor truckle to the public. It does what its nature compels it to do, irrespective of consequences. Public favor is welcome, if it comes, but it will not be bought at the price of self-prostitution.

"Public neglect," writes Mr. Galsworthy, "lack of appreciation or even the suffering of condemnation, eccentricity, poverty, are certainly no signs or indications of greatness. But the great are usually neglected, poor, and often eccentric to their contemporaries and familiars, just because they are great, namely, above and beyond their time and place, and it takes centuries for the rest of us to begin to understand or even catch a glimpse of their heights. That which is superficial and flamboyant is readily and quite immediately grasped, because it is on level ground, and he who runs may see."

✓ Just as artistic genius labors for no extrinsic reason, so its product, the art work, is inherent in value, needing no justi-

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fication other than that it is a record of vital experience. Its effect on the public is altogether irrelevant to its genuine worth as an art work. No art work is great just because it pleases, nor is it lacking in greatness because it displeases. Its significance or lack of significance is derived from no sources other than itself. To genuinely appreciate an art work is an achievement to the appreciator, for he has risen to the heights of its creator. But to judge it is an impertinence. As a product of genius, the art work judges us; we judge it only at the risk of displaying our limitations to rise to its level. The art work loses nothing of its inherent value by being judged. But by judging it we lose the opportunity of dwelling with it long enough to permit its significance to dawn upon us. What a Keats, a Shakespeare, or a Beethoven lived, labored over, and poured his life's blood into is no matter for judgment, but for reverence, hope, and gratitude if its power penetrates into us and revives us. The sole judge of the art work, the only one who can judge and has a right to judge, is the artist himself of his own work. But what the artist judges is not his experience, but his success in giving that experience adequate expression. His divine discontent is not so much with what he has lived, but with his powers as a craftsman to execute what his imagination commands. Here his reach invariably exceeds his grasp, and what stands before him in bodily form as a finished product is always but an imperfect shadow of his mental substance. But the onlooker is in no position even to evaluate the artist as an artisan, for he can have no conception of the purpose, the idea, behind the form, excepting as it is revealed to him by that form. If the form appears imperfect to him it is probably because he reads an idea into it that is foreign to the purpose of the artist. All that he can do, therefore, legitimately, is lend himself completely to the art work that it might work upon him. If it works favorably he should be grateful. If unfavorably he might bemoan his powers of perception. And if indifferently, let him hope, with Plato, that, "after long intercourse with the thing itself, and after it has been lived with,

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suddenly, as when the fire leaps up and light kindles, it is found in the soul and feeds itself there."

If the value of an art work depended upon its effect on the spectator the artist would be in a hopeless dilemma. For whom is he to please, and who are his judges, and whose judgment is to guide him? The critics? History shows the critics to be mostly on the wrong side of the fence. Most often, what they condemned has survived, and what they praised has disappeared. Nor do the critics agree, excepting to disagree. Which critic is he then to accept? The only way the artist could please the critics is by turning himself into a chameleon. His case with the public is even more hopeless. The public may claim that it knows what it wants, but the trouble is that each of its members wants something else, and that which they want varies with their physiological state. Hence, in accordance with this criterion, any art work may be great one day and quite inferior another day. Any criterion of the value of art, therefore, other than its own intrinsic significance, reduces the whole realm of artistic creative work to an absurdity and a hopeless confusion. There is no more reason why the work of the artist should be dependent for its value on the reactions of the public than that of the scientist. But even the proposal of such a criterion for the scientist would be greeted with loud laughter, whereas it is taken for granted for the artist. But why so? The real scientist is always an artist. The motive of the scientist, to quote the words of one of the greatest of all time, Albert Einstein, is "to seek a simplified synoptic view of the world conformable to their own nature, overcoming the world by replacing it with this picture." This fits the artist, the philosopher, the saint and mystic of religion, as well as the scientific worker. The spirit of all creative endeavor is of one kind. It transforms the world of sensory perception into a universe suited to the needs of an imaginatively creative mind. All creativeness is a self-realization through the material of the environment. The commonness of the common man is his satisfaction with the common, that is, with communal experi-

ence. The superiority of the superior man is likewise precisely that the common and obvious are no more than the raw material for the building of a home suitable for his being. Both the common man and the superior one are occupied with the business of living. Everything else is an outgrowth and an accessory to the essential business of subsistence. For the common run of man subsistence means the pursuit of material health, wealth, and power, and the happiness accruing from their possession. For him the acquisition of the outer physical leads to the satisfaction of the inner self, and his activities are limited to the realm of common perception. His self-realization is dependent predominantly upon what he can acquire of the world's common goods. The self-realization of the genius is inner. He seeks the world in order to find himself, and his works, in whatever realm, are the stepping-stones towards that end. That is their intrinsic value, their inherent justification. That such works profit mankind is accidental and extrinsic to their initial or essential value. The genuine artist communicates with none but himself, and his works are the records of such self-questioning and self-answering. If others derive any benefit or good from his labor nothing is added to its inherent value, nor is anything taken away from it if others fail to be impressed with it. The absurdity resulting from the extrinsic justification of art is well illustrated by Tolstoi, who, in his insistence that the sole function of art is communication of emotion, condemns as bad or false art the whole of Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and Beethoven.

† Since the art work is inherent in value it also transcends time and place. The inherent, the intrinsic has neither chronology nor geography, but belongs to all epochs and all localities. That whose value is derived from time, is also discarded in time. What time creates it also destroys. Modes, manners, fashions, and customs serve the purpose of the period that called them forth, and pass away. Since they come into existence as means for living, they go out of existence as they become worn out by living. Life has its necessity and its

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conveniences. Its necessity is to live, and it invents conveniences for living. The necessity is inherent, therefore permanent, the convenience is external and transitory. The art work is not a convenience, but a necessity. It is not a means for living, but a record of a way of life. It stands as a monument to himself erected by a great man of his moments of supreme greatness. It is life incarnated, uttered, expressed, by those who drank it in spirit and substance, that those who can no more than taste, yet may look, wonder, and be refreshed.

What, now, as a result of the above summary of the creative process and the nature of genius, can we conclude about the artist and art in general, and the art work in particular?

We engaged in an analysis of the creative process and the creative mind for the sole purpose of getting at the spirit and substance of art. For our data we have utilized the most reliable evidences available, namely, the utterances and pronouncements of those who know, the creators themselves. Their voices are unanimous in proclaiming that they are driven to their labors by a force, a power, that is beyond their control, that will not be denied, that knows no obstacles, and that neither seeks nor asks for any rewards other than its own satisfaction. This force, this power, is the imaginative consciousness which opposes itself to the practical consciousness and asserts, in the face of the biological demands of existence, that the law of life is the revelation of self to self and not the capitulation of self to the non-self. Every art work is a declaration and proclamation of this law of the imaginative consciousness, a law enunciated in ringing terms by the greatest artist of all time: what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? The artist is the champion, the torch-bearer through the ages, of the claims of life as a self-subsistent, self-revealing process, with art works for his witnesses. The artist creates out of no motive other than this inner necessity, and his creation has no end besides the expression of that necessity. The artist seeks nothing but the clarification of the life that is in him, while the sole purpose and function of art is to him that of a verifi-

cation of his life to himself. The artist is a self-searcher, and art a self-revealer. "I feel assured," wrote Keats, "I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labors should be burnt every morning and no eye ever shine upon them." Thoreau wrote in his diary upon the return of the greater portion of the first edition of his book as unsaleable: "Nevertheless, in spite of the result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen tonight, to record what thought or experience I may have had, with as much satisfaction as ever."

What, now, can we tell about the art work from our analysis? It tells us that the art work is an adequate, perfect record of an achievement in significant living. The record is adequate, perfect, in that it is the result or product of a highly conscious process of choice, selection and rejection, examination and re-examination, so that the local habitation is a perfect reflection of the inhabitant, the inhabitant prompting, even dictating, the planning and erection of the structure. The building is not merely constructed around the inhabitant, but out of him. It is of him, by him, and for him. It reflects him and he reflects it. It is empty without him, while without it he is but a shadow. The two are so fused and blended that a change in one is a change in the other, the destruction of one means the destruction of the other. They are eternally wedded to each other, and not even death can tear them asunder without material destruction. And the record is significant in that it is not merely a record of a commonplace, routine, habitual event, but of an achievement in living, of a growth, a development in personality, a transformation of life from a lower to a higher level. The life of habit is the life of stagnation, of blind routine, life in the valleys and plains of existence. The creative life is the growing life, the life that climbs from peak to peak towards the sun. In the life of habit reach and grasp are one, for there is nothing to reach for that has not already been grasped. For the creative life the reach exceeds the grasp, but the grasp ever strains for the reach. The art work is the perfect record of one attainment in this yearning of the

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reach for the grasp. The art work is thus an expression of a unique experience, a living, vital experience, on the part of a unique, vital, living mind, in a unique, vital, living manner. In the process of the growth of the art work impersonal, cold, objective experience is translated, transformed, and transmuted into a personal, subjective innerly created world. That is, the impersonal world comes to us, bidden or unbidden, reports itself to us unannounced. The personal world happens to us, reveals itself to us gradually from within ourselves, using the impersonal for its raw stuff. The impersonal becomes personal in that so soon as the fiction, the living idea, is sensed in the fact, the fact becomes fiction, the objective is transmuted into the subjective, matter becomes idea, but incarnated in matter. The art work thus is a re-creation of the world, a cold, distant world becomes an intimate world aglow with the fire of personal experience, the re-creation of the world involving a rebirth of the creator, a new insight into the universe, giving a new vision of self. It therefore has a warmth, a glow, an intensity of feeling that welcomes and greets a great discovery. Objective experience is the accumulation of knowledge. Personal experience is an achievement in living, an adventure and discovery in self-realization. Each art work represents therefore an epoch in the development of the personality of its creator. It is a landmark in the progress of self-discovery, a monument to a coming into being, into a higher consciousness of life, of a mind that is ever being reborn, reincarnated. For, as has been well said: "The mark of our passion is to wander without rest in the search for ourselves. The mark of our power is not to discover ourselves. Whoever has penetrated the mystery of himself no longer has to resolve the drama by projecting it into his work, with that heroic force which intoxicates the spectator." The art work, in short, is adequate, hence successful expression of creative, hence, vital, experience. "All the works . . . that have been published by me," wrote Goethe, "are only fragments of one great confession." An art work is a permanent and an adequate record of an adventure and discovery in significant, creative living.



## PART II

### ART AND THE LAYMAN

*Men do not realize that the power to appreciate a great or good thing and the will to accept it are made warp and woof exactly of the same psychic stuff as is the power to create them and differs from originality only in degree.—G. Stanley Hall*





## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXPERIENCE OF BEAUTY

For the æsthetically creative mind art is the transformation of the common world of perceptual experience into the unique realm of imaginative thought plus its adequate recording in some material form. Art is the reconstruction of the factual universe into an ideational universe in conformity with the needs of a creative mind. That is its service to the artist. It is his way of life. But what service does it render the lay mind? What is the source of its universal appeal to the non-artist? What widespread common need does it satisfy? What impulse, what urge, sends the proverbial man of the street to art? To say that he goes to art for recreation is but to raise the question: recreation from what? If he seeks recreation through art there must be some destructive element in his life for which art is an antidote. What is that disintegrating element, and in what way does art reintegrate it? What do we lose in our daily, ordinary contacts that art restores to us and so restores us? In a word, what is there in human nature that calls for art?

We shall attempt an answer to these questions by a study of the nature of the experience of beauty. To the layman, that which the artist produces is art only when he can report that it is beautiful, and therefore it is his need for beauty that art serves. If, then, we can obtain a clear idea of what he means by beauty we have a key to that part of his nature to which art appeals.

The experience of beauty, like all complete experience, is complex in structure. It is composed of a number of elements, each of which is easily mistaken for the whole. Hence we have numerous so-called theories of beauty, each theory calling attention to one of its component ingredients, and disregarding, more or less, the other constituents. It is this condition that has given rise in the minds of the uncritical

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to the notion that æstheticians contradict each other, and hence, that beauty is indefinable. But æstheticians no more contradict each other than do chemists when they study some perplexing compound and report its several elements. The æsthetic theories are supplementary, and it is only when we put all of them together that we obtain an idea of the nature of the experience of beauty in its totality.

### 1

#### THE THEORIES OF BEAUTY

We shall consider the following theories: *intrinsicity*, *disinterestedness*, *significant form*, *objectification*, *empathy*, *psychical distance*, *intuition*, *æsthetic repose*, and *catharsis*. These theories are divisible into two groups, namely, theories of (1) Mental Attitude, and theories of (2) Organic State. Under (1) belong intrinsicity, objectification, psychical distance, significant form, intuition, disinterestedness, and empathy, and under (2) catharsis and æsthetic repose. Our problem is fourfold: (1) to see whether each of the Attitude Theories contains the substance of every other theory, whether each theory can be deduced from every other theory, whether each theory is thus but an elaboration or a restatement of every other theory; (2) to do likewise for the State Theories; (3) to see whether the State Theories are deducible from the Attitude Theories, and *vice versa*; (4) to seek the coördinating center for all the theories.

#### a. THEORIES OF MENTAL ATTITUDE

*Intrinsicity.* We begin with the theory of intrinsicity for no other reason than that we must begin somewhere. Any other theory would be just as effective for the crucial purpose here intended.

This theory holds that in beauty experience is valued for itself, is its own justification, in contrast with practical experiences, like the good, the true, or the useful, where experience is esteemed for its fruits, and hence is not sufficient in itself, but

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is justified by its results. In other words, whenever experience becomes significance as experience, whenever its value is immediate rather than derived, whenever value is placed upon experience as experience, it is termed an experience of beauty, and its object is labeled an object of beauty. Beauty is thus a matter of emphasis. When an activity or an interest is considered as a means towards some end, and directed by a consciousness of the end to be accomplished, the experience is utilitarian, practical. When the emphasis is on the activity itself, when the activity or interest is its own end, the experience is beautiful. A common illustration is "a beautiful walk," namely, when the activity of walking is engaged in for its own sake, in contrast with walking to reach a certain destination, when the activity becomes laborious. In beauty, value is intrinsic, the activity is the value and the value is the activity. In practical experience the value is outside of the activity, extrinsic to it, namely, in some conscious end that the activity is to promote.

*Disinterestedness.* The theory of disinterestedness holds that in the experience of beauty interest is attached to the immediate event rather than to some felt need that is promoted by the event. The experience is in this sense impersonal, that is, detached from conscious personal motives. For instance, walking for one's health is an interested, motive-full, intentional activity, since the activity may be unpleasant in itself, but is persisted in because of the desirability of the end to be accomplished. The difference is brought out in such remarks as that the laborer works for his hire, and the artist for the sake of the work. Both laborer and artist work, of course, toward an end, but while the laborer is interested only in the end, works only because of the fruits of the labor, the artist finds satisfaction in the work itself, at the end of which he may even feel grief instead of satisfaction. Again, this theory also deals with emphasis. In disinterestedness the emphasis, the concentration, is on the immediate activity; in interestedness it is on the culmination of the activity. Thus disinterestedness is object-centered, while interestedness

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is self-centered. Platonic friendship is an instance of disinterestedness, and hence labeled beautiful, while friendship based upon some ulterior motive, upon some conscious gain to be obtained from the association, is given an opprobrious name.

Now it is obvious that this theory is in substance but a restatement of the theory of intrinsicity. In the interested attitude attention is centered on considerations outside the event itself, that is, on extrinsicities. I work because I want the money or the fame, or because I must, in order to satisfy some external pressure. The work is not its own justification, intrinsic, but finds its justification in something outside of itself, something extrinsic to itself. In disinterestedness, on the other hand, emphasis is on the thing itself, hence attention is intrinsic, the activity is its own justification, interest in it being for itself. [Hence intrinsicity and disinterestedness describe the same attitude.]

*Significant Form.* This theory is advanced by Clive Bell in his book, *Art*. His statement of it is as follows:

All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art. I do not mean, of course, that all works provoke the same emotion. On the contrary, every work produces a different emotion. But all these emotions are recognizably the same in kind; so far, at any rate, the best opinion is on my side. That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, etc., is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the æsthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of æsthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.

For either all works of visual art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber. Everyone speaks of "art", making a mental classification by which he distinguishes the class "works of art" from all other classes. What is the justification of this classification? What is the quality common and peculiar to all members of this class? Whatever it be, no doubt it is often found in company with other qualities; but they are adventitious—it is essential. There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot

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exist; possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our æsthetic emotions? What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cézanne? Only one answer seems possible—significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our æsthetic emotions. Their relations and combinations of lines and colours, these æsthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.<sup>1</sup>

A simple illustration will bring out the substance of this theory. Two men are observing a column of smoke emanating from a smoke-stack of a steel mill. One of them comments "What a shame that this be tolerated to pollute the atmosphere, befog the landscape, soil linen," etc., etc. The second exclaims "How beautiful." Now what is it that is beautiful in the smoke? Apparently not that which pollutes the atmosphere, etc., but the phenomenon as such, namely, the form that is directly present before us. The form is the essence of the phenomenon, for if that disappeared the phenomenon would disappear, while its effects, the befogging of the atmosphere, etc., are its consequences or attributes. The theory states, then, that whenever form becomes significant, meaningful, as form, the experience is termed beautiful.

This illustration serves also to point out the identity of this theory with that of intrinsicity and of disinterestedness. The first observer is concerned with the consequences, results, effects of the phenomenon, in other words, with those aspects of it that are extrinsic to the phenomenon, *per se*. His attitude is calculating, subjective, namely, interested. The second observer's interest is in the phenomenon as a phenomenon, in its essential intrinsic phase, hence he is unaware of the consequences of anything that the phenomenon gives rise to, and his attitude is thus disinterested. We can then state any one of these three theories in terms of the other two. Thus, in the

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 6-8, New York, Frederick A. Stokes Company.

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disinterested attitude attention is centered on the essential, intrinsic aspect of an event, and this aspect is, necessarily, its form. Or, when attention is focussed on the intrinsic aspect of an event, that is, on its form as form, the attitude is disinterested, in that any considerations of the effects of the event are out of mind. Or, when attention is centered on the form of a phenomenon rather than on its consequences, the experience is necessarily intrinsic and disinterested.

*Psychical Distance.* Dr. E. Bullough gives the following excellent account of his theory:

A short illustration will explain what is meant by "Psychical Distance." Imagine a fog at sea: for most people it is an experience of acute unpleasantness. Apart from the physical annoyance and remoter forms of discomfort such as delays, it is apt to produce feelings of peculiar anxiety, fears of invisible dangers, strains of watching and listening for distant and unlocalized signals. The listless movements of the ship and her warning calls soon tell upon the nerves of the passengers; and that special, expectant, tacit anxiety and nervousness, always associated with this experience, make a fog the dreaded terror of the sea (all the more terrifying because of its very silence and gentleness) for the expert seafarer no less than for the ignorant landsman.

Nevertheless, a fog at sea can be a source of intense relish and enjoyment. Abstract from the experience of the sea fog, for the moment, its danger and practical unpleasantness, just as every one in the enjoyment of a mountain-climb disregards its physical labor and its danger (though, it is not denied, that these may incidentally enter into the enjoyment and enhance it); direct the attention to the features "objectively" constituting the phenomenon—the veil surrounding you with an opaqueness as of transparent milk, blurring the outline of things and distorting their shapes into weird grotesqueness; observe the carrying-power of the air, producing the impression as if you could touch some far-off siren by merely putting out your hand and letting it lose itself behind that white wall; note the curious creamy smoothness of the water, hypocritically denying as it were any suggestion of danger; and, above all, the strange solitude and remoteness from the world, as it can be found only on the highest mountain tops; and the experience may acquire, in its uncanny mingling of repose and terror, flavor of such concentrated poignancy and delight as to contrast sharply with the blind and distempered anxiety of its other aspects. This contrast, often emerging with startling suddenness, is like a momentary switching on of some new current, or the passing ray of a brighter light, illuminating the outlook upon perhaps



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the most ordinary and familiar object—an impression which we experience sometimes in instants of direst extremity, when our practical interest snaps like a wire from sheer over-tension, and we watch the consummation of some impending catastrophe with the marveling unconcern of a mere spectator.<sup>1</sup>

Psychical distance then means distance from one's self, one's personal, practical interests in the event. In any experience, the closer that one is to one's own self, the more that one is concerned with one's interests, the farther one is removed, psychically, from the object, in that he relates it to himself, stands over it, appraising and evaluating it, consciously seeking through it the satisfaction of some need, and aware of a separation between himself and the object, namely, that the object is a means towards some conscious personal end that is to be attained. Conversely, the farther that one is removed from one's self, from personal considerations, the closer he gets to the object, in that the self-interests do not intervene and separate subject and object, hence there is a mergeance, the subject being in the object, instead of the object being consciously used to further some need of the subject. In the former attitude there is psychical distance, in the latter psychical closeness.

In psychical distance, therefore, experience becomes significant as such, valued as experience, while the fruit of experience, namely, the extrinsicities that arise in the interested attitude, are absent. This theory is, then, but another restatement of those of disinterestedness, intrinsicity, and significant form.

*Objectification.* George Santayana defines beauty as pleasure objectified. His formulation of it is as follows:

Finally, the pleasures of sense are distinguished from the perception of beauty, as sensation in general is distinguished from perception; by the objectification of the elements and their appearance as qualities rather of things than of consciousness. The passage from sensation to perception is gradual, and the path may be sometimes retraced: so it is with beauty and the pleasures of sensation. There is

<sup>1</sup> " 'Psychical Distance', as a Factor in Art and an Æsthetic Principle," *The British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 5, pp. 87-118.

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no sharp line between them, but it depends upon the degree of objectivity my feeling has attained at the moment whether I say "It pleases me," or "It is beautiful." If I am self-conscious and critical, I shall probably use one phrase; if I am impulsive and susceptible, the other. The more remote, interwoven, and inextricable the pleasure is, the more objective it will appear; and the union of two pleasures often makes one beauty.

In Shakespeare's 137th sonnet are these words:

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem  
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!  
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem  
For that sweet odor which doth in it live.  
The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses.  
But, for their beauty only is their show,  
They live unwooded and unrespected fade;  
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so:  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made.

One added ornament, we see turns the deep dye, which was but show and mere sensation before, into an element of beauty and reality; and as truth is here the co-operation of perceptions, so beauty is the co-operation of pleasures. If colour, form, and motion are hardly beautiful without the sweetness of the odour, how much more necessary would they be for the sweetness itself to become a beauty! If we had the perfume in a flask, no one would think of calling it beautiful: it would give us too detached and controllable a sensation. There would be no object in which it could be easily incorporated. But let it float from the garden, and it will add another sensuous charm to objects simultaneously recognized, and help to make them beautiful. Thus beauty is constituted by the objectification of pleasure. It is pleasure objectified.<sup>1</sup>

In ordinary feeling we find two traits. I see you are sad, and I know that the sadness is in you and not in me. Or I am sad and I refer the sadness to myself and not to the thing or situation that made me sad. Or if your sadness makes me sad, I make a distinction between the two and say that your sadness made me sad. But in beauty we have the unique fact that the feeling which is in me is referred to the object which created the feeling in me. The feeling is objectified,

<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of Beauty*, New York, Scribner, 1896, pp. 50-52.

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expressed, which means that it receives a form, it becomes the thing that has aroused it, and is contemplated or observed as the thing. Thus in an æsthetic attitude I contemplate my own feelings, objectify them, consider the self in relation to the feelings instead of the feelings in relation to the self. The feelings, therefore, are not mine, but I am the feelings. I become identified with them. I am therefore disinterested, detached from the self, in other words, objectified.

What is the nature of "the thing," the object, that is observed in this attitude? It cannot be the thing of ordinary experience any more than the feeling is that of ordinary experience. Just as in ordinary experience we do not observe the feeling for itself but in its meaning, so an object in ordinary experience is seen not as it is in itself but in its relationship to other things or to the observer. The reality of an object to me, ordinarily, resides in its significance to me, what it does to me, how it affects me, what is its meaning to me. Consequently, when feeling becomes detached from me it becomes attached not to the *meaning* of the object as chair or table, that is, to its extrinsic aspect, but to the object itself, namely, its intrinsicity, that which it is in itself, as a form. Thus meaning and form become identical: the form being the meaning, and the meaning the form. And for the same reason, percipient and perceived become identified, for, when the meaning, which is *I*, is referred to the object, I also reside in the object. Object and subject thus fuse into pure being.

Now what does this theory offer us that is new, that is not contained in the theories already discussed? All that it does is add the affective element to the theories of intrinsicity, disinterestedness, etc. These theories describe the mental attitude in the experience of beauty. The theory of objectification describes the feeling attitude. What it tells us is this: that since what is present to mind in the intrinsic, disinterested, psychically distanced attitude is not subjective meaning, but objective meaning, the feeling-counterpart of the experience is also objective. Beauty is really not so much pleasure objectified, but rather the pleasure is objectified

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because beauty is an objective experience, and hence the pleasure-aspect of the experience is also objective.

→ *Intuition.* This is a theory advocated by the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce.

Croce identifies the æsthetic experience with intuition, and intuition with expression. Intuition is, for Croce, a midway station between sensation and perception, in the psychological connotation of these terms. To Croce sensation and matter are identical. Sensation is formless matter, chaotic, unformulated confusion. In the words of Croce, "it is what the spirit of man suffers, but does not produce. Without it no human knowledge or activity is possible; but mere matter produces animality, whatever is brutal and impulsive in man, not the spiritual dominion, which is humanity."<sup>1</sup> Perception, as used in psychology, is the process of interpretation of sensation in terms of behavior, that is, meaning. But before chaotic sensation can become perception, it must become individualized, systematized, ordered, in a word, formulated. This process of form-giving, individualizing, Croce calls intuition. Intuition is contrasted with intellect. Through intuition we obtain knowledge of individual things, and through intellect knowledge of relations between them. Examples of intuitive knowledge are, an impression of a moonlight scene by a painter, a musical theme, the words of a singing lyric. These are complete, self-contained, formed impressions, "intuitive facts without a shadow of intellectual relation," that is, not dependent on anything outside of themselves for their meaning. The meaning is intrinsic. Intuition is also expression, for this form-giving process is an activity of the mind, spiritual activity, as Croce calls it, a mental creation, an imaginative act. "Every true intuition or representation is also *expression*. That which does not objectify itself in expression is not intuition or representation, but sensation and mere natural fact. The spirit only intuits in making, forming, expressing."<sup>2</sup> Ordinarily the intuitive process is superseded by interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> *Æsthetic*. Copyright, 1922, by the Macmillan Company, reprinted by permission.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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tion, that is, by perception. Then it loses its purity, form is submerged in meaning, resulting in a practical attitude. Interest is no longer in form, but in relations, meanings, and consequences. The attitude becomes interested, selfish, utilitarian. Thus the æsthetic attitude liberates us from the practical, from perception, and leads us back to pure experience, to intuition. "In our intuitions," says Croce, "we do not oppose ourselves as empirical beings to external reality, but we simply objectify our impressions, whatever they may be."

In this theory, then, we have a restatement of the doctrine of intrinsicality, and therefore by implication, also of the other theories, with the addition of the idea of expression. What this theory states, in substance, is, that our ordinary experience becomes intuitive experience, æsthetic experience, when stripped of everything but what is directly, immediately experienced, namely, form. In this state the attitude is necessarily disinterested, depersonalized or objectified, distanced, intrinsic.

*Empathy.* The theory of empathy or *Einfühlung* (feeling-into), advanced by the German, Theodor Lipps, holds that the æsthetic experience is one in which we project our own state of being into things, attribute to them our own feelings whether of activity or passivity. The forces, tendencies, and strivings that we feel in inanimate objects like columns are our own muscular activities projected into them. Thus when I feel a column "striving" upwards, it is my "striving" that I "feel into" the column. I project my own inner state into the perceived object, so that I and the object become one. In the wording of Lipps "The meaning of the object to me as object, is in reality what I am within myself, but through the object, and hence also in the object." In other words, my own state was induced in me by the object, and therefore the object is within me and I am in the object.

Empathy is not specifically an æsthetic theory, but the psychological principle of the source of all meaning, applied to æsthetic experience. All significant experience is an instance

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of empathy. Without inner participation of some sort and to some degree, experience is meaningless. Inner strains and stresses, incipient movements, are phases of all perception, and in no manner limited to æsthetic perception. There is probably more objectification of these strains and stresses of perception in æsthetic experience, but this in itself does not make of empathy an æsthetic theory *per se*. Since in beauty all subjective occurrences become objectified, the incipient movements are necessarily also referred to the object and not to the subject. It is also probable that these movements are more balanced in æsthetic experience because of the unity of the art product, and it is also probable that they are more intense because of the state of complete absorption and merger with the object of experience. Yet this is also true of listening to an effective speaker, of intense interest in reading a book on science, in which experiences there may be nothing æsthetic. Hence, all that may be said of empathy is that its rôle in beauty is that of its rôle in experience in general and it therefore tells us nothing that is uniquely æsthetic.

### b. THEORIES OF ORGANIC STATE

*Æsthetic Repose.* This theory concerns itself with the bodily state in the æsthetic experience. Its advocate, Ethel Puffer, defines beauty as a "moment of perfection, of self-complete unity of experience, of favorable stimulation with repose."<sup>1</sup> The æsthetic state is repose in tension, "a combination of favorable stimulation and repose." Ordinarily, repose is a state of muscular relaxation, of mild stimulation. Ordinarily, intense stimulation, muscular tension, means excitement, restlessness, desire to engage in gross behavior. But in the æsthetic state there is muscular tension, intense stimulation, but instead of excitement, restlessness, there is repose. Hence the exhilarating effect of beauty: increased tonicity, and also peace. In this state we have the cake and also eat it.

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of Beauty*, p. 56. Reprinted by permission of, and special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

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How does this unique state come about? What is its cause? Puffer attributes it to the condition of the art work. The art work is necessarily, by its very nature, a unified object. "The symmetrical picture calls out a set of motor impulses which 'balance,'—a system of energies reacting on one center; the sonnet takes us out on one wave of rhythm and of thought, to bring us back on another to the same point; the sonata does the same in melody. In the 'whirling circle' of the drama, not a word or an act that is not indissolubly linked with before and after. Thus the unity of a work of art makes the system of suggested energies which form the foreground of attention an impregnable, and invulnerable circle . . . all incidents to motor impulse—except those which belong to the indissoluble ring of the object itself—have been shut out by the perfection of unity to which the æsthetic object has been brought."<sup>1</sup>

We may suggest another cause than the unity of the art work for the state of repose, a cause that is not only plausible but which also brings Puffer's theory in harmony with the Theories of Attitude.

Tension, that is, incipient movement, as we have seen, is a concomitant of all significant experience. The greater the tension the more significant the experience. In intense emotion, for instance, tension is near its maximum, hence the intense significance of the exciting stimulus. But in all such cases, the tension overflows into overt behavior, and the greater the tension the more violent and gross is the outer activity. In æsthetic experience, however, there is great tension, but no gross manifestation. Why? Simply because tension makes experience significant as experience, while its overflow in gross movements is not concerned with the experience as such but with the doing of something about the experience. In other words, gross movement is interested because aroused by extrinsic considerations, while incipient movement is disinterested, being intrinsic. Thus, if the inner tensions in fear and anger were not to overflow into gross movements both anger and fear would become experiences of beauty,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

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as is the case in the drama. Since in the drama we follow the flow of events as events, without considering the fruits and consequences of the events, the outer manifestations that would be present were we to have these experiences under ordinary conditions, are absent. Now when such outer manifestations are absent there is repose in tension. And that is what happens in beauty, in æsthetic repose; namely, since beauty is an attitude of disinterestedness, intrinsicity, etc., the overt acts of interested, extrinsic experience do not occur. Hence, in the theory of æsthetic repose we have the organic aspect of the Theories of Attitude.

*Catharsis.* The doctrine of catharsis dates to Aristotle and has been subjected to numerous interpretations. More ink has been spilled over the single sentence in the *Poetics* in which Aristotle states his theory regarding the function of the drama than has been the fate of any other one pronouncement in the history of æsthetics. "Tragedy," says Aristotle, "is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper *katharsis*, or purification, of these emotions."<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle nowhere tells us what this purifying process is, how tragedy effects this catharsis. Nor does he limit it to tragedy, for in the *Politics* he speaks at some length of the purification effect of music.

Now of what is the emotion cleansed, in what way is it altered, and why? To cleanse is to eliminate all those properties of a thing that are not of its essence and substance, and leave only that which constitutes the thing in itself. The essence of emotion is the inner tension, the organic occurrences. The gross activities are an accretion, a consequence, arising from the practical necessity to get rid of the exciting stimulus. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle defines fear as "a species of pain or disturbance issuing from an impression of impending

<sup>1</sup> S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, London, 1923, p. 240



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evil which is destructive or painful in its nature.”<sup>1</sup> That is, the emotion is destructive and disturbing because the individual refers the incident to himself, hence the overt activity to get rid of it, to ward it off. But, as Butcher puts it, “The emotion of fear is profoundly altered when it is transferred from the real to the imaginative world. It is no longer the direct apprehension of misfortune impending over our own life. It is not caused by the actual approach of danger. It is the sympathetic shudder we feel for a hero whose character in its essentials resembles our own.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, “The true tragic fear becomes an almost impersonal emotion, attaching itself not so much to this or that particular incident, as to the general course of action which is for us an image of human destiny,”<sup>3</sup> so that the emotion becomes disinterested, objectified, distanced, intrinsic, and hence that which would happen in the practical, interested subjective attitude, namely, to run, weep, or any other gross expression of emotion, is not called forth since it has no reason for being. Catharsis, therefore, like æsthetic repose, is the physiological counterpart of the mental attitude in the experience of beauty. And the two theories are aspects one of the other, since the catharsis consists of the repose in tension, and the repose in tension is the catharsis.

### 3

#### THE SUBSTANCE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF BEAUTY

Our examination of the æsthetic theories shows quite plainly that, far from contradicting each other, all of them are driving at one common substance in somewhat different language. What is this substance, this central thread that runs through them? It is that the æsthetic experience is one in which, to use the words of Walter Pater, “Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end.” Beauty is an impression giving a feeling of completeness in its kind, of self-sufficiency, of significance in, by, and for itself. It is a state of attention, of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.

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complete absorption, from which all mental strain is absent, in which the mind is free of desire and will, of straining and striving, calculating and scheming, a mental state of intense interest, yet without intellectual effort bent on understanding or consequent action.) Beauty is a state of being in which we are raised above time and place, lifted out of the stream of life, in which there is neither past nor future, neither before nor after, but only the now exists. It is the unique glory of moments of beauty, as has been well said, that "they have nothing to do with business, with the adaptation of means to ends, with the bustle and dust of life. They are impractical and purposeless. They serve no interest and further no cause. They are self-sufficing, and neither point to any good beyond themselves, nor overflow except by accident into any practical activities."<sup>1</sup> No better account of this state of being is to be found than that given by Schopenhauer. He writes:

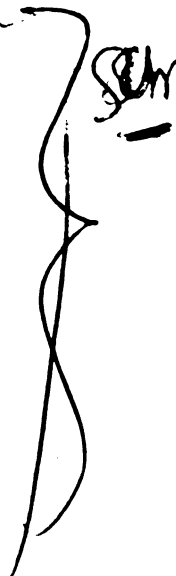
If, raised by the power of the mind, a man relinquished the common way of looking at things, gives up tracing, under the guidance of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, their relations to each other, the final goal of which is always a relation to his own will; if he thus ceases to consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither of things, and looks simply and solely at the *what*; if, further, he does not allow abstract thought, the concepts of the reason, to take possession of his consciousness, but, instead of all this, gives the whole power of his mind to perception, sinks himself entirely in this, and lets his whole consciousness be filled with the quiet contemplation of the natural object actually present, whether a landscape, a tree, a mountain, a building, or whatever it may be; inasmuch as he *loses* himself in this object, i. e. forgets even his individuality, his will, and only continues to exist as the pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object alone were there, without any one to perceive it, and he can no longer separate the perceiver from the perception, but both have become one, because the whole consciousness is filled and occupied with one single sensuous picture; if thus the object has to such an extent passed out of all relation to something outside it, and the subject out of all relation to the will, then that which is so known is no longer the particular thing as such; but it is the *Idea*, the eternal form, the immediate objectivity of the will at this grade; and therefore, he who is sunk in this perception is no longer individual, for in such

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Balfour, *Essays Speculative and Political*, George W. Doran Co., p. 88.

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perception the individual has lost himself; but he is *pure*, will-less, painless, timeless, *subject of knowledge*. . . . In such contemplation the particular thing becomes at once the *Idea* of its species, and the perceiving individual becomes *pure subject of knowledge*.<sup>1</sup>

In sum: beauty is experience become significant as experience. Beauty is an unique relationship existing between a perceiving subject and a perceived object, the uniqueness consisting in the fact that the subject is completely immersed in the active contemplation of the object as object, a pure form, the subject thus existing in a state of complete intellectual and affective detachment from the world of facts or ideas that are outside the object present to mind. Such experience or activity is intrinsic, disinterested, objective, significant as form, psychically distanced, therefore reposeful, and therefore also cathartic. On the other hand, when experience or activity becomes significant because of its consequences it is practical. Such experience or activity is extrinsic, interested, subjective, significant as meaning, psychically close, therefore restless and troublesome. And when practical experience becomes obnoxious, repugnant, it is ugly. Beauty is, in a word, pure experience. And whenever such experience is aroused by some object or phenomenon in nature, that object or phenomenon is termed beautiful. Whenever such experience is aroused by any product of man that product is called an art work.



### 4

#### THE SERVICE OF ART

The æsthetic experience, we find, is a release, an emancipation from the practical demands of living. It is a restoration of the wholeness of the self which is constantly being shattered by the conflicting upheavals of biological necessity. Its appeal lies in the respite that it offers from oneself, from one's daily struggling, wounded, self, which Romain Rolland describes in such glowing words:

Life passes. Body and soul flow onward like a stream. The years are written in the flesh of the aging tree. The whole visible world of

<sup>1</sup> *The World as Will and Idea*, Kegan Paul, Vol. I, pp. 251-252.

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form is forever wearing out and springing to new life. Thou only dost not pass, immortal music. Thou art the inward sea. Thou art the profound depths of the soul. In thy clear eyes the scowling face of life is not mirrored. Far, far from thee, like the herded cloud, flies the procession of days burning, icy, feverish, driven by uneasiness, huddling, moving on, on, never for one moment to endure. Thou art a whole world to thyself. Thou hast thy sun, thy laws, thy ebb and flow. Thou hast the peace of the stars in the great spaces of the field of night, marking their luminous track-plows of silver guided by the sure hand of the invisible ox-herd.

Music, serene music, how sweet is thy moony light to eyes wearied of the harsh brilliance of this world's sun! The soul that has lived and turned away from the common horse-pond, where, as they drink, men stir up the mud with their feet, nestles to thy bosom, and from thy breasts suckled with the clear running waters of dreams. Music, thou virgin mother, who in thy immaculate womb bearest the fruit of all passions, who in the lake of thy eyes, whereof the color is as the color of the rushes, or as the pale green glacier water, enfoldest good and evil, thou art beyond evil, thou art beyond good; he that taketh refuge with thee is raised above the passing time; the succession of days will be but one day, and death that devours everything on such an one will never close its jaws.<sup>1</sup>

To escape from necessity is one of the least recognized, and yet one of the most intense of human cravings, and the more sensitive the individual soul, the more intensely does it cry out against the tyranny and oppression of life's everyday affairs and trials. Wordsworth cries:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

<sup>1</sup> *Jean Christophe*, Henry Holt and Co., pp. 349-350.

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In like vein Keats sings in *To a Nightingale*:

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green.  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim;

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs;  
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

And in more prosaic terms Bertrand Russell suggests an avenue of escape from the tyranny of life:

When first the opposition of fact and ideal grows fully visible, a spirit of fiery revolt, of fierce hatred of the gods, seems necessary to the assertion of freedom, to defy with promethean constancy a hostile universe, to keep its evil always in view, always actively hated, to refuse no pain that the malice of Power can invent, appears to be the duty of all who will not bow before the inevitable. But indignation is still a bondage, for it compels our thoughts to be occupied with an evil world; and in the fierceness of desire from which rebellion springs there is a kind of self-assertion which it is necessary for the wise to overcome. Indignation is a submission of our thoughts, but not of our desires; the stoic freedom in which wisdom consists is found in the submission of our desires, but not of our thoughts. From the submission of our desires springs the virtue of resignation; from the freedom of our thoughts springs the whole world of art and philosophy, and the vision of beauty by which, at last, we half reconquer the reluctant world. But the vision of beauty is possible only to unfettered contemplation, to thoughts not weighted by the load of eager wishes; and thus Freedom comes only to

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those who no longer ask of life that it shall yield them any of the personal goods that are subject to the mutation of Time.<sup>1</sup>

What indications are there in life's routine of the need and desire for escape, or, in other words, how does this urge for relief manifest itself under usual conditions?

One source of evidence is the great popularity of certain types of literature whose subject-matter is of a highly fantastic and improbable nature, namely: stories of adventure of the Robinson Crusoe type; romances, in which life appears as perfect and harmonious; fairy tales, with their unfailing appeal to young and old; mythology, where the prince is always perfect and the princess always beautiful; utopias of perfect government and harmonious social relationships; all these afford a compensation for the shortcomings and frustrations of actual experience.

In a more definite manner this ever active urge manifests itself in the organization and appeal of secret societies with their very mysterious sounding names and esoteric rituals and ceremonies; in masquerades where the individual hides temporarily in the guise of a character of fictitious origin or distant land; and in the ever-recurring outbreak of the wanderlust. Nor is there a person who has not at one time or other experienced a strong impulse to be someone else, to possess the traits and characteristics of another individual, to exchange occupations or social standing.

Another avenue of escape is a type of experience that is surrounded with a great deal of mystery, and is particularly associated with religion, namely, mysticism. The mystical experience consists essentially "in a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seem to qualify what we are pleased to call our Self." "It is an experience in which the universe becomes without form and void of content," and during which one becomes identified with the unity of all life and thus attains a condition in which the eternal strife between subject and object is obliterated.

<sup>1</sup> "Mysticism and Logic," *A Free Man's Worship*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1919, p. 51.

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## 5

### ART AS RELEASE

In what way does art carry out this high function of affording an escape from the cold and clammy facts that hedge us in? It carries out this great calling in two ways: First, by emancipating the subject from the disturbing effects of thought and emotion, and second, by purging the object of the encumbrances piled upon it by practical concerns.

Our most usual reaction to any event in our environment that attracts our attention is active and aggressive. We are ever asking the world about us to tell us something, the secret of its constitution, or the story of its meaning, or the justification of its existence, its what, its how, and its why. In science and in philosophy there is a beginning, but no end; one fact displaces another, one function suggests another, one value contradicts another. To mind in action, man and his world present an endless series of problems: problems of fact and fiction, of cause and effect, of good and evil, and the answer to any one problem is but an incentive to still further problems. Thought keeps the individual in a constant, and ever-increasing, turmoil and confusion, questioning and answering, affirming and denying, an "ever becoming, and a never being."

Emotion, even more so than thought, its twin brother, is a source of vexation and turmoil. An emotion is an intensely wrought-up state of the organism caused by some disturbing feature in the environment, and demanding an immediate adjustment of some kind. Emotion is synonymous with strong desire, either to possess or to reject. It is an energy-creating process, instigating to action, and during its presence there is excitement and agitation, while its passing leaves the organism in a state of exhaustion.

From the æsthetic experience both thought and emotion are ruled out. Beauty is the negation of mental and emotional activity, to which is due its peace-giving power. Beauty neither inquires nor reasons, does not analyze or speculate, weigh or

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consider, but accepts in a state of pure contemplation. In moments of sheer beauty there is thus a release from the petty rounds and vexations of routine existence created by thought and emotion, since in such moments we neither look forward nor backward, consider neither means nor ends, but are steeped in the present experience, without contrasting it with the past or relating it to the future. It is from the freedom of our thoughts that the vision of beauty springs, and by means of which we subdue and becalm the ruffled sea of life.

Likewise, beauty rids us of the load of eager wishes with which we are usually burdened through emotion. Beauty never creates anger, fear, resentment, envy, or jealousy. It is a state of complete repose, a moment of perfect peace, during which all the powers and processes of body and mind are functioning harmoniously, and which leaves us in a state of heightened vitality physically, and exaltation, spiritually. By purging us of emotion and all its consequences, during which we stand consciously over an object, desiring it or rejecting it, moving towards it or away from it, beauty establishes a close intimacy between us and the object, we and the object become fused and blended in a single pulse of experience.

Beauty not only cleanses consciousness of the waste accumulations of the stream of thought and emotion, but also frees the object of all the encumbrances imposed upon it in ordinary experience. Art does not view an object in its connections with other things or in its relationships and meanings to a person. It lifts the object out of its material surroundings, isolates it from its environment, strips it of all attributes forced upon it by the mind, and which are not part and parcel of its inherent being, and thus permits it to stand on its own merits, what in itself it truly is. In moments of beauty, nothing extraneous or foreign to the essence of the object is present in consciousness. "To isolate the object for the mind, means to make it beautiful, for it fills the mind without an idea of anything else: we are interested in the impression as it is in itself, without any reference to anything outside of it in space and time; and this complete repose, where the objective im-



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pression becomes for us an ultimate end in itself, is the only possible content of the true experience of beauty."

It is because art eliminates thought and emotion, and isolates the object from its material and personal relationships, that beauty is a purgation, a catharsis, creating a state of self-forgetfulness. Self is the consciousness of being separate and different from other persons and objects. It is the product of a standing battle between the individual and his environment. It is through the environment that the individual functions, that is, through which he seeks the realization of his aims and objectives. But the environment does not readily yield to the demands of man. It resists his efforts to make of it a path through which to travel to his goal. And it is this resistance that sets the machinery of thought and emotion into operation in an effort to overcome the obstacles on the road to self-realization. The more obstinate the resistance, the more intense do thought and emotion become, and the greater the consciousness of self. The self is most in evidence, most aggressive, when our efforts for attaining a certain end meet with severest frustrations. But, in the words of Schopenhauer:

. . . when some external cause or inward disposition lifts us suddenly out of the endless stream of willing, delivers knowledge from the slavery of the will, attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will, and thus observes them without personal interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively, and gives itself entirely up to them so far as they are ideas, but not in so far as they are motives. Then all at once the peace which we were always seeking, but which always fled from us on the former path of the desires, comes to us of its own accord, and it is well with us. It is the painless state which Epicurus prized as the highest good and as the state of the gods; for we are for the moment set free from the miserable striving of the will.

This state may be described as pure contemplation, as sinking oneself into perception, losing oneself in the object, forgetting all individuality, surrendering that kind of knowledge which comprehends only relations: the state by means of which at once and inseparably the perceived particular thing is raised to the idea of its whole species, and the knowing individual to the pure subject of will-less knowledge and as such they are both taken out of the stream of time and all

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other relations. It is then all the same whether they see the sunset from the prison or from the palace.<sup>1</sup>

Thoreau writes:

I hear one thrumming a guitar below stairs. It reminds me of moments that I have lived. What a comment upon our life is the least strain of music! It lifts me above the mire and dust of the universe. . . . Ninety-nine one-hundredths of our lives we are mere hedgers and ditchers but from time to time we meet with reminders of our destiny. We hear kindred vibrations, music! And we put our dormant fields into the limits of the universe. We attain to wisdom that passeth understanding. . . . What is there in music that it should so stir our deeps? Suppose I try to describe faithfully the prospect which a strain of music exhibits to me. The field of my life becomes a boundless plain, glorious to tread, with no death nor disappointment at the end of it. All meanness or trivialness disappears.

The beautiful is thus a life-giving, and a life-saving influence. Psychologically its essence lies in "the profound satisfaction we feel when, through the medium of fantasy, we escape from imposed limitations into an aggrandized personality and a harmonized universe. This kind of satisfaction not only can be said to give rise to the feeling 'beauty'—it is beauty. Its very essence is illusion. And illusion is vital to us because of the restrictions, of every kind, that hem us in: we come into the world confident of omnipotence, and daily our power dwindles. 'Brightness falls from the air,' pain teaches us that we are mortal, injury leaves us crippled, knowledge serves rather to show us our strength. We look back to that earlier hour as to something infinitely bright and happy, we desire passionately and constantly to return to it, and we seek in day-dreams to do so. It has been urged that in the day-dream, or art, we do not really seek to escape from ourselves, but, precisely, to find ourselves. But what part of ourselves is it that we find? Is it not exactly that part of us which has been wounded and would be made whole: that part of us which desires wings and has none, longs for immortality and knows that it must die, craves unlimited power and has instead 'common sense' and the small bitter 'actual':

<sup>1</sup> *The World as Will and Idea*, Kegan Paul, 1891, Vol. I, pp. 254-255.

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that part of us, in short, which is imprisoned and would escape? . . . There can be little question about it, and it is precisely of the associations connected with these major psychic frustrations that we have evolved the universal language of healing which we call art."

Art is imagination's bold effort to escape the moving present, with its conflicts, its problems, its passions, rivalries, victories, and defeats. And it is for this reason that art makes its strongest appeal to, and is most eagerly sought after, by those persons who live most intensely and discriminatingly, namely, the highly organized in intelligence and temperament. He who lives most, and discriminates most, suffers most, and to him a refuge from the everyday world becomes a living necessity. To such an one art has a biological function. But to the cold, phlegmatic, constitution, art is primarily a form of recreation for leisure hours, and as a recreation, the closer it resembles life, the greater is the amount of ordinary pleasure that it yields. Consequently, some value art for its realism, others for its symbolism. But the highest art is the art that comes closest to fulfilling its true function and thus, the closer that art resembles life, the poorer it is as art. Art does not imitate life, but takes life for its rough material, and refashions and purifies it. It is not life that holds a mirror up to art, but art which is the mirror for life as it might be.

\* \* \*

Our next task is to see whether this theoretical conclusion on the nature of beauty is supported by the best available thought as to what constitutes the æsthetic element in the arts. We shall examine for this purpose the arts of music, painting, and poetry.



## CHAPTER VII

### BEAUTY IN MUSIC

It is a fact of common everyday observation that individuals vary to a significant degree in what music means to them, and in what they get out of it. Pages might be filled with quotations from the best and most cultivated minds in illustration of two extreme responses, as well as the gradations between them, from that of Dr. Johnson, to whom music was the "costliest of rackets," to Carlyle, to whom it represented "a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the infinite and lets us for a moment gaze into that." To Romain Rolland music is a "moony light to eyes wearied of the harsh brilliance of this world's sun," while Charles Lamb sat through opera and oratorio "till, for sheer pain and inexplicable anguish, I have rushed out into the noisiest places of the crowded streets, to solace myself with sounds which I was not obliged to follow, and get rid of the distracting torment of endless, fruitless, barren attention."

#### 1

### THE VARIETIES OF MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

An excellent, concrete summary of the range of these individual differences in the musical response is offered by the results of a study made by Vernon Lee on *Varieties of Musical Experience*.<sup>1</sup> This investigator asked a number of persons to answer the following question: "When music interests you, has it got for you a meaning which seems beyond itself, or does it remain just music?"

She reports that:

about half of the subjects interrogated did precisely answer that undoubtedly music *had* a meaning *beyond itself*, many adding that, if it had not, it would constitute only sensual enjoyment and be un-

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, Vol. 207, 1918, pp. 748-757.

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worthy of their consideration, some of them moreover indignantly taking in this sense my words about *music remaining just music*. That for these persons music did not remain *just music*, but became the bearer of messages, was further made certain by pages and pages, often of unexpectedly explicit or eloquent writing admitted to describe the nature of that *message*, to describe the things it dealt with and the more or less transcendental spheres whence that message of music seemed to come.

So far for one-half of the answers. The others either explicitly denied or disregarded the existence of such a *message*; insisted that music had not necessarily any *meaning beyond itself*, and far from taking the words "remains just music" as derogatory to the art or to themselves, they answered either in the selfsame words or by some paraphrase that when they cared for music it *remained just music*. And in the same way that the believers in *meaning as message* often gave details about the contents of that message, so, on the other hand, the subjects denying the existence of a message made it frequently quite clear that for them the meaning of music was in the music itself, adding that when really interested in music they could think of nothing but the music.

Concerning the nature of the message or the meaning found in music by the first group of listeners, Vernon Lee comments as follows:

The affirmative answers, often covering many pages, showed that according to individual cases the *message* was principally of one of these kinds: visual or emotional, abstract or personal, but with many alterations and overlappings. But fragmentary, fluctuating and elusive as it was often described as being, and only in rare cases defining itself as a coherent series of pictures, a dramatic sequence or intelligent story, the *message* was nevertheless always a *message*, inasmuch as it appeared to be an addition made to the hearers' previous thoughts by the hearing of that music, and an addition due to that music and ceasing with its cessation.

The other half of the listeners did not deny the existence of a meaning or a message in music, but nevertheless claimed that:

whenever they found music completely satisfying, any other meaning, anything like visual images or emotional suggestions, was excluded or reduced to utter unimportance. Indeed this class answered by a great majority that, so far as emotion was concerned, music awakened in them an emotion *sui generis*, occasionally shot with human joy or sadness, or on the whole analogous to the exaltation and tenderness

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and sense of sublimity awakened by the beautiful in other arts or in nature, but not to be compared with the feeling resulting from the vicissitudes of real life. It was nearly always persons answering in this sense who explicitly acquiesced in the fact that music could remain, in no derogatory sense, but quite the reverse, *just music*.

In his great work, *The Power of Sound*,<sup>1</sup> Gurney also recognizes two types of listeners, which, "though they shade into one another, and may each of them in various degrees be realised by a single individual in listening to a single composition, are for all that in their typical state radically different." The two types of listeners are the *definite* and the *indefinite*, the difference between the two lying in what it is they hear, and the kind of pleasure they experience. In definite hearing there is a perception of form, namely, melodic and harmonic sequences and combinations, while indefinite hearing involves "merely the perception of successions of agreeably-toned and harmonious sound." This distinction is basic, since for Gurney the outstanding feature of a melody is an "ideal motion," a melody consisting of units of motion, in which each tone "yearns" to move to another tone and each unit of motion or phrase to another unit, both movements tending towards a definite position. These motions, one vertical as pitch, and the other horizontal as rhythm, give each melody a unity of form and a definiteness which constitute its unique individuality. The indefinite listener, therefore, who does not grasp the form, does not hear music at all, but only discreet pleasant sounds. It is the response to the "ideal motion" which is to Gurney the one essential source of the pleasurable experience of music, and which constitutes the æsthetic element of the art of tone. Consequently there are various reasons why

the pleasure arising from any series or combination of sounds which conveys no distinct musical meaning should be lower and less than that attainable through more definite apprehension . . . First, there is the evidence of the majority of those who at all enjoy listening to Music, and who have experienced at different times both sorts of pleasure. Next, we have the right to identify the higher pleasure with the more specialized, that which is appreciated by the more developed and differ-

<sup>1</sup> Gurney, Edmund, *The Power of Sound*, London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1880, p. 304.

entiated sense; and which of course belongs to the distinct exercise of the musical faculty, as opposed to the nearly universal nervous susceptibility to the effect of rich and powerful sound. Next, while the impression of mere beauty of sound-color is exceptionally sensuous and passive, not admitting of any of the indirect æsthetic effects given (as we have seen) by the material of architecture, nor of the associations of space and freedom which a painter's most formless hues may gain from the blue sky and the other colored spaces of nature, the apprehension of musical motives, on the other hand, constitutes a specially active kind of self-realization. And lastly, there is the point already sufficiently insisted on, the power of, in some measure at least, permanently possessing forms which have once become familiar, in contrast to the utter transience of all formless sound-effects.<sup>1</sup>

A classification similar to that of Gurney is made by Ortmann,<sup>2</sup> who labels Gurney's indefinite hearer as the *sensorial* type and the definite listener as the *perceptual* type. The sensorial Ortmann calls the most rudimentary form of response, which has for its basis the raw sensory material of music.

Responses of the sensorial type are limited entirely to what is given in the auditory stimulus itself; and this stimulus is restricted here to a single tone, or an unanalyzed chord. The characteristics of such a stimulus are, in audition: pitch, intensity, duration, quality, and whatever sensorial factor we find must be explained as the result of the effects of these characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

The *perceptual* Ortmann describes as the interpretation of the sensorial reaction:

The perceptual response . . . is concerned with auditory things: progression, sequence, motive, phrase, form, outline, contrast, ascent, descent, movement, and many others. . . . The basic difference between the perceptual and sensorial responses is the presence in the former, and the absence in the latter, of relationships. The sensorial response represents a single impression upon consciousness. In the perceptual response, the effect of each separate stimulus is determined by its environment. What has preceded the present stimulus leaves its influence upon it. A tone now becomes a part of a melody, a chord becomes a part of a tonality, and a phrase becomes part of a form.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *The Effects of Music* (a series of studies edited by Max Schoen) 1927, Kegan Paul, Chap. III.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

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On the mental side, the perceptual response involves active or voluntary attention.

Since perception is a conscious process demanding for its proper operation both analysis and synthesis, it is accompanied by active or voluntary attention. It means a response to the stimulus different from the nature of the stimulus itself. This added increment is the result of sustained concentration or mental work.<sup>1</sup>

Ortmann recognizes a third type, an *imaginal*, which, however, fits perfectly with Gurney's definite response, since its basis is the "ideal motion," namely, a feeling for tonality, anticipated chordal resolutions, responses to a melody *in harmony*, and the like.

A somewhat different grouping is made by Hanslick,<sup>2</sup> whose essay is devoted to combating the popular notion that the aim and object of music is the expression of emotion. By inference from his argument Hanslick would recognize two types of listeners, the impure or the extrinsic, and the pure or the intrinsic. To the extrinsic listener, "sound and its ingenious combination are but the material and the medium or expression, by which the composer represents love, courage, pity, and delight. The innumerable varieties of emotion constitute the idea which, on being translated into sound, assumes the form of a musical composition." To such listeners the substance of music is in what it implies: "the whispering of love, or the clamor of ardent combatants." For the *intrinsic* hearer, on the other hand, the essence of music is sound and motion, and it expresses nothing but musical ideas—that is, music consists wholly of sounds artistically combined. "The ingenious co-ordination of intrinsically pleasing sounds, their consonance and contrast, their flight and reapproach, their increasing and diminishing strength—this it is, which in free and unimpeded forms presents itself to our mental vision."

Of experimental studies on types of listeners that of Myers<sup>3</sup> is probably the most exhaustive and inclusive that has as

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *The Beautiful in Music*, Novello, Ewer and Co., 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *The Effects of Music*, Chap. II.



yet appeared. His classification is based upon introspective reports of fifteen persons of various degrees of musicalness who reported their reactions to six musical compositions played on the phonograph, namely: Beethoven's Overture to "Egmont" (*Op.* 84), Tschaikowsky's "Valse des Fleurs" from the "Casse-Noisette" Suite (*Op.* 71a), and his "Italian Capriccio" (*Op.* 45), Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture ("Fingal's Cave," *Op.* 26), the first of Grieg's Symphonic Dances (*Op.* 64), and Kreisler's setting and rendition of Couperin's "Aubade Provençale."

From his data Myers deduces the following four types of listeners:

1. The *intra-subjective* type. To this type of listener music appeals for the sensory, emotional, or conative experiences it arouses. That is, the attention of the hearer is held by the sensory effects, or the flow of feeling, or the experience of self-activity induced by the music.

2. The *associative* type. In this response the main appeal of the music lies in the extra-musical ideas and associations it suggests. For instance: "I was in the Queen's Hall, a fair girl in a pink dress was playing and another girl was accompanying her. The violinist had a sad look about her. I felt she had a sorrow in her life."

3. The *objective* type. This listener assumes a critical attitude toward the music, it is analyzed and evaluated as an æsthetic structure. "I noticed by what simple means in these modern days he gets his effects. . . . I noticed also . . . how he gathered up his climax by syncopation."

4. The *character* type. Here the music is personified as a subject, given character traits such as morbid, joyful, dainty, mystic, reckless, playful, etc.

## 2

### PRINCIPLES OF EVALUATION

What, then, is the experience of beauty in music?

The first principle as a basis for evaluating the relative æsthetic significance of the various attitudes outlined above

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is borrowed here from William James. "It is a good rule in physiology," says James, "when we are studying the meaning of an organ, to ask after its most peculiar and characteristic sort of performance, and to seek its office in that one of its functions which no other organ can possibly exert." Surely the same maxim holds good in our present quest. The essence of religious experiences, the thing by which we finally must judge them, must be that element or quality in them which we can meet nowhere else, and such a quality will be of course most prominent and easy to notice in those religious experiences which are most one-sided, exaggerated and intense." In its bearing upon the present problem this principle suggests that the essence of the æsthetic experience in music, or for that matter, the æsthetic experience derived from any source whatever, must possess a quality of a unique nature, a quality that marks off this experience from other types of experiences such as the good, or true, or useful. The experience of beauty *is* good, true, and useful, but the quality that stamps it as "beauty" is not its goodness, truth, or utility, since an experience may have all of these, and yet not be beautiful.

Second, every experience derived from music can not, by virtue of that fact alone, be an experience of beauty, for, if it were, then beauty would be anything and everything, and therefore nothing. When one exclaims, "This is beautiful," he must have experienced a quality which led him to designate the object as beautiful instead of designating it by some other quality. Likewise, if several persons label an object as being beautiful they must have experienced a common quality, which led them to a common response.

Third, in a discussion of the nature of beauty the issue involved is not that concerning the *validity* of the different kinds of experiences that may be derived from a work of art, but of the relative significance of the experiences as experiences of beauty. Therefore, while all reactions to a work of art are equally *valid*, as experiences, for the person experiencing them, they are not of equal *value* as beauty simply because their stimulus is an art object. While it is

true, then, that of tastes there is no disputing, it is also true that of tastes there is evaluating, the basis for the evaluation being the essential nature of the experience under discussion, this essential nature lying in that unique quality which distinguishes that experience from other experiences.

### 3

#### THE BEAUTIFUL IN MUSIC

The essential nature of the æsthetic experience in music is to be sought, following the suggestion of James, in those cases in which it manifests itself in its most exaggerated, one-sided, and intense form. The procedure for our search is thus evident: (1) an examination of what musicians and persons of outstanding musical taste such as Gurney and Hanslick have to say about their musical experiences; (2) an inquiry into the question of whether experimental studies on the subject support the conclusion drawn from (1).

1. Several years ago the writer sent out questionnaires and also had interviews with a number of prominent musical artists, with the object of obtaining from them a statement of their musical experiences. The question put to these persons was:

“When you find yourself in an attitude of intense musical appreciation, what is your general condition of being, physical and mental?”

The answers to this question from a few of the persons follow:

I am usually in a state of muscular tension—with my hands clenched. If I am really in the æsthetic ecstasy, I am absolutely oblivious of my surroundings. I cannot get to that point except by the piano—that is really the only instrument that can give me the genuine æsthetic feeling—then everything is black except where the piano is, and I am very tired afterwards. The effect stays with me for a day or two. I feel as though I do not want to be interrupted by anybody or anything rough or harsh, in any sense. I want nothing rough or coarse which could not share that state with me. . . . If I begin to think of any matters of personal interest or any memories while listening, then it is a sure sign that the music is mediocre, that it does not hold my attention as music. There are some associations in situations of this kind.

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If I hear some dance music, I may feel slightly different in mood, and I can sometimes trace it to a more or less temporary emotional experience, to some association with the dance. Even matters of momentary interest can have that influence upon the music that is not the musical experience at all. I might have the same experience with anything else. The smell of a perfume may have its associations. It is not an æsthetic one, but you can have a very definite association with some girl who has used that particular type of perfume. I have had experiences in which the music had a soothing effect, and I started day-dreaming, perhaps extravagantly, of power and mastery, perhaps I dream of doing something which reveals social approval. If I do that, it means that I do not care a rap about the music.

. . . . .

When I am in a state of the most intense enjoyment of music, I am never introspective. I never catch myself at it. Looking back on it, I should say that I have rather become the music than remained something apart with some attitude towards it. On the less intense absorption, I should say that music in a very definite way restores me in body, mind, and spirit. I am afraid I am a poor informant, though, in this case, for I really cannot state confidently any one reaction except that of a rapt condition, at the end of which I take a deep breath and come back. My enjoyment is derived directly from the music. Associations or imagery, even when suggested by the title, fade from my mind as I listen to the music, and I do little except get my mouth set for the particular kind of taste which I am about to receive.

. . . . .

When I find myself in the act of intense enjoyment, it is generally after the experience is over. For such moments, loss of myself is fairly complete. This is, however, for special occasions; the ordinary rhythmic enjoyment of music is very much on the plane of any usual sensuous enjoyment, as eating or drinking. The self is perfectly conscious of the thing being enjoyed. In the supreme moment there seems to be a fusion and I am one with the thing heard. Such moments cannot be but a few seconds in duration, but they raise the whole attitude into a different level. . . . Music that does not affect me strongly often sets me off into a reverie, if it does not roil me. But in the supreme moment the enjoyment seems to come directly as the result of the music, without any suggestion whatever, except that of motion and movement. What I seem to feel is perfection, the realization of an ideal, and perfect harmony between matter and spirit. Why this should move me so, I am unable to tell unless it may be that as in our ordinary consciousness our physical, mental, and spiritual limitations are constantly with us and we are living most of the time, because of our personality, in a state of

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strife, whenever a perfect moment comes and we forget ourselves, and find the strife giving place to a perfect union, we experience a certain vacation or respite from ourselves.

Hanslick is nothing short of combative in his insistence as to what a truly musical experience is. He writes: "The task of clearly realising music as a self-subsistent form of the beautiful, has hitherto presented unsurmountable difficulties to musical æsthetics, and the dictates of 'emotion' still haunt their domain in broad daylight. Beauty in music is still as much as ever viewed only in connection with its subjective impressions, and books, critiques, and conversations continually remind us that the *emotions* are the only æsthetic foundation of music, and that they alone are warranted in defining its scope." This proposition Hanslick claims to be entirely false:

The beautiful, strictly speaking, *aims at nothing*, since it is nothing but a *form* which, though available for many purposes according to its *nature* has, as such, no aim beyond itself. If the contemplation of something beautiful arouses pleasurable feelings, this effect is distinct from the beautiful as such. I may, indeed, place a beautiful object before an observer, with the avowed purpose of giving him pleasure, but this purpose in no way affects the beauty of the object. The beautiful is and remains beautiful though it arouse no emotion whatever, and though there be no one to look at it. In other words, although the beautiful exists for the gratification of an observer, it is *independent* of him.

In this sense music, too, has no *aim* (object) and the mere fact that this particular art is so closely bound up with our feelings by no means justifies the assumption that its æsthetic principles depend on this union.<sup>1</sup>

What then constitutes the æsthetic response in music? In Hanslick's opinion "the art aims, above all, at producing something beautiful which affects not our feelings, but the organ of pure contemplation, our imagination."

In the pure act of listening, we enjoy the music alone, and do not think of importing into it any extraneous matter. But the tendency to allow our feelings to be aroused implies something extraneous to the music. An exclusive activity of the *intellect*, resulting from the con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Beautiful in Music*, pp. 18-19.

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templation of the beautiful, involves not an *aesthetic* but a *logical* relation, while a predominant action on the feelings brings us on still more slippery ground, implying, as it does, a *pathological* relation.<sup>1</sup>

The beautiful in music, Hanslick insists, is specifically musical:

It is extremely difficult to define this self-subsistent and specifically musical beauty. As music has no prototype in nature, and expresses no definite conceptions, we are compelled to speak of it either in dry, technical terms, or in the language of poetic fiction. Its kingdom is, indeed, "not of this world." All the fantastic descriptions, characterizations, and periphrases are either metaphorical or false. What in any other art is still descriptive, is in music already figurative. Of music it is impossible to form any but a musical conception, and it can be comprehended and enjoyed only in and for itself.<sup>2</sup>

The ideas which a composer expresses are mainly and primarily of a *purely musical* nature. His imagination conceives a definite and graceful melody aiming at nothing beyond itself. Every concrete phenomenon suggests the class to which it belongs, or some still wider conception in which the latter is included, and by continuing this process, the idea of the absolute is reached at last. This is true of musical phenomena. This melodious Adagio, for instance, softly dying away, suggests the ideas of gentleness and concord *in the abstract*. Our imaginative faculty, ever ready to establish relations between the conceptions of art and our sentiments, may construe these softly-ebbing strains of music in a still loftier sense, e. g., as the placid resignation of a mind at peace with itself, and they *may* arouse even a vague sense of everlasting rest.<sup>3</sup>

When we turn to Gurney we find once more that he leaves no doubt as to what constitutes for him a truly musical experience. Gurney insists, as does Hanslick, that "expressiveness of the literal and tangible sort is either *absent or only slightly present* in an immense amount of impressive Music;" that to "suggest describable images, qualities, or feelings, known in connection with other experiences, however frequent a characteristic of music, makes up no inseparable or essential part of its function; and that this is not a matter of opinion, or of theory as to what should be, but of definite

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

everyday fact." Furthermore, "when we come to the *expression* aspect of music, to the definite suggestion or portrayal of certain special and describable things, we should naturally expect to be able to trace in some degree the connection of any special suggestion or shade of character with some special point or points in the musical form and the process by which we follow it. . . . None of them . . . can be held accountable for any musical *beauty* which may be present; a tune is no more constituted beautiful by an expression, e. g., of mournfulness or of capriciousness, than a face is. The impressiveness which we call beauty resides in the unique musical experience whose nature and history have just been summarized."

Let us now see what the experimental studies tell us about this problem. If, in keeping with our findings, we divide listeners into two general types, (1) the *intrinsic*, or those who are engrossed in "the thing itself" and (2) the *extrinsic*, or those to whom music is a means towards an end, it is apparent that Ortmann's *sensorial* type, Myer's *intra-subjective*, *character*, and *associative* types, and Lee's *message* type belong under (2), while the perceptual and imaginal types of Ortmann, the objective type of Myers, and the *no message* type of Lee come closest to (1). What have these investigators to say about the musical value of the types as established by them?

The sensorial reaction, according to Ortmann, is typical of children, untrained adults, untalented pupils, and is the predominant factor in popular music. Thus Ortmann's findings support the conclusion of Gurney as to the musical significance of the sensorial-indefinite response. Of the perceptual and imaginal types in which attention to structural form, or the substance of music as music, is predominant, Ortmann says: "The perceptual response in all but a very primitive form, is largely absent from the response form of the untalented person. This type of response is preëminently that of the talented person. . . . We may expect to find the auditory imaginal response characteristic essentially of trained musicians and superiorly talented laymen who have frequent

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associations with auditory stimuli." Again it is apparent that Ortmann's findings support both Gurney and Hanslick.

For the musical significance of the types established by him, Myers concludes that the objective attitude towards music, "in which the musical material is considered in reference to the listener's standard, occurs most frequently among those technically trained in music, who tend to adopt a critical attitude and are interested in the material of their art." This type of listener has a tendency to suppress all personal feelings, activities, associations, and characterizations that the music might evoke, in favor of the critical, analytical standpoint. As to the place of associations or imagery in the musical response, Myers claims that:

- ✓ In the grossly unmusical, music evokes no associations, because it evokes no corresponding emotion. In the professional musician, music also evokes few or no associations, because he tends to inhibit them by his assumption of a critical, objective attitude. Among the most highly musical, associations tend also to be repressed, because the music
- ✓ comes to be listened to for its own meaning and beauty, apart from the meaning and beauty derived from associations. In four of the five persons whose temperament was extremely artistic but who had little or no technical knowledge of music, associations were to a large extent replaced by symbols, e. g., of pattern, color, or expanse, the activities of which, however, tended themselves to evoke associations.

When the average person listens to music, then, associations are enjoyed for their own sake, adding enormously to the total æsthetic appreciation obtainable. The associations may be in themselves beautiful; they invite the listener to share in the beauty of a story and in the emotions of the persons created in his imagination. Among the more highly musical I find that associations are more particularly apt to intrude when the music is felt to be "stagey," unreal, meretricious, or vulgar. Thus M reports associations as the music "began to get more barbaric" and as he "lost interest in the music." He observes, however: "The middle of the second movement (which he enjoyed) switched me off my imagery, and I returned to the pure consideration of the music."

It is by no means strange that associations should appear among the highly musical when music lacks interest or inherent beauty, whereas the less musical tend to appreciate music not so much on the grounds of its inherent beauty as for the enjoyment of the associations evoked. The explanation depends on difference of æsthetic level, the level of



the musically gifted person standing higher than that of one averagely musical. So long as the former, attending merely to the music, *qua* music, can maintain his high level of æsthetic enjoyment, associations are debarred from consciousness. But when for any reason he fails to maintain that level, e. g., because his æsthetic appreciation ceases, then the products of lower-level aspects enter, e. g., associations more or less incongruous with the enjoyment of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

The intra-subjective aspect Myers puts down as the lowest kind of beauty since in this attitude the person surrenders himself to the sensory, emotional, and impulsive effects of the music. In this case,

as the listener gives himself up to the enjoyment of such experiences, all that he gets is delight or joy, not beauty. As Bullough rightly points out, a process of psychical "distancing" is required in order that any of his sensations or emotions may appear beautiful. One must look on them with a certain detachment, to a certain extent impersonally. He has to project the beauty into his sensory, emotional or conative experience, instead of subjectively appreciating the delight or joy to which they give rise. He has to look on them as a spectator, and in some measure at least to regard that experience as constituting in and for itself a living, unitary, independent entity.<sup>2</sup>

Myers summarizes his general conclusions from his studies as follows:

We can now see how the various aspects which we have distinguished in the listener may each play a part in the awareness of beauty, and how the different fundamental connections of music, with courtship, with dancing, and rudimentary language, may each contribute to æsthetic enjoyment. These different connections may be differently stressed in different persons to-day, so that one tends specially to sexual, another to dramatic, another to verbal associations with music. But we come to recognize that, apart from these connections, music may be appreciated for its own inherent beauty, that is to say, apart from its sensuous, emotional or conative influences, and from associations, symbols and products of "animistic" characterizations. The one common and essential attitude required for æsthetic enjoyment is one of detachment. The listener must view the music, as Bullough rightly insists, from a certain psychical "distance." If that distance be excessive, as occurs in listening for the first time to exotic music or to other unfamiliar styles of music, the person feels too remote to get, as

<sup>1</sup> *The Effects of Music*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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it were, to grips with the art material. It is overdistanced. On the other hand, it is underdistanced when he surrenders himself wholly to its influence in such a way that he is a more or less passive instrument, played upon by the music, without paying any regard to his sensations, images, emotions, or impulses, save in so far as they have immediately personal and "practical" import.<sup>1</sup>

Of her two types of listeners, the one to whom music was just music, and the other to whom the significance of music lay in the message that is conveyed, Lee finds that

the more musical answerers were also those who repudiated the message, who insisted that music had a meaning in itself, in fact, that it remained for them "mere music." A certain number of highly musical subjects not only declared this to be the case with themselves, but foretold that we should find it so with every sufficiently musical hearer. Their own experience was that the maximum interest and maximum pleasure connected with music can leave no room for anything else. And this answer led to the framing of queries bearing upon musical attention; queries which elicited some very unexpected information. For the distinctly musical answerers proved to be those who admitted without hesitation that their musical attention was liable to fluctuations and lapses. They were continually catching themselves thinking of something else while hearing music. They complained of their own inattention and divagation. But—and this is the important point in the evidence—these lapses were regarded by them as irrelevancies and interruptions; the music was going on, but their attention was not following it. The less musical answerers, those also who found in music a meaning beyond itself, seemed comparatively unaware of such lapses or interruptions. From some of their answers one might have gathered that rather unmusical people could sit through two hours of a concert with unflagging enjoyment. But further sets of inquiries revealed that, although unbroken by boredom, restlessness or the conscious intrusion of irrelevant matters, that enjoyment was not confined to the music. When asked whether the music suggested anything, they abounded in accounts of inner visions, trains of thought and all manner of emotional dramas, often most detailed and extensive, which filled their minds while, as they averred, they were listening to the music; indeed some of which, they did not hesitate to admit, constituted the chief attraction of the music.<sup>2</sup>

Lee finally concludes that there exist two different modes of response to music, namely: one,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>2</sup> *Varieties of Musical Experience.*

*listening* to music, the other, *hearing* music with lapses into merely overhearing it. Listening implied the most active attention moving along every detail of composition and performance, taking in all the relations of sequences and combinations of sounds as regards pitch, intervals, modulations, rhythms, and intensities, holding them in the memory and coördinating them in a series of complex wholes, similar (this was an occasional illustration) to that constituted by all the parts, large, or small, of a piece of architecture; and these architecturally coördinated groups of sound-relations, i. e., these audible shapes made up of intervals, rhythms, harmonies and accents, themselves constituted the meaning of music to this class of listeners; the meaning in the sense not of a message different from whatever conveyed it, but in the sense of an interest, an importance, residing in the music and inseparable from it.

Hearing music, on the other hand, as it is revealed by our answerers, is not simply a lesser degree of the same mental activity, but one whose comparative poverty from the musical side is eked out and compensated by other elements. The answers to our questionnaires show that even the least attentive hearers have moments, whose frequency and duration depend both on general musical habits and on the familiarity of the particular piece or style of music, of active listening; for they constantly allude to their ability to follow or grasp, as they express it, the whole or only part of what they happen to hear. But instead of constituting the whole bulk of their musical experience (in such a way that any other thought is recognized as irrelevant these moments of concentrated and active attention to the musical) shapes are like islands continually washed over by a shallow tide of other thoughts, memories, associations, suggestions, visual images and emotional states, ebbing and flowing round the more or less clearly emergent musical perceptions, in such a way that each participates of the quality of the other, till they coalesce, and into the blend of musical thoughts there enters nothing which the hearer can recognize as inattention, as the concentrated musical listener recognizes the lapses and divagations of which he complains.<sup>1</sup>

The answer to the question as to what constitutes the æsthetic attitude in music stands out clearly and insistently. The beautiful in music lies in "listening to music," and not in "hearing music"; not in the associations, images, reflections, emotions, that it may arouse, as secondary or derived effects, but in the experiencing of the "thing itself" the musical form. And even this experiencing of the "thing

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Musical Experience.*

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itself" must be direct, spontaneous, detached, and not arbitrary, critical, or analytical. That is, it must be "listening *to* music" not "listening *about* music." Myers rightly insists that "to treat the art material as a mere inanimate object having a certain value in reference to the person's standard is . . . merely a last resource in the case of the untrained; while in the case of the technician it is a consequence of his absorption in the material. It is the refuge of the untrained in the absence of the potentially æsthetic aspects of character, associations, and intra-subjective experience. It is the resource of the artist, in his endeavor by repression to escape from the influence of the other aspects, in order, it may be, to obtain the highest appreciable beauty of music, the beauty of musical meaning which is inexpressible in any other terms." The conscious critical attitude is destructive of the æsthetic experience, since a process of analysis destroys the very substance of the object that is being analyzed.



## CHAPTER VIII

### PAINTING

Music, we find, substantiates our conclusion on the nature of the experience of beauty. Is this conclusion also supported by the other arts? Pater claims that all art aspires to the condition of music; hence, if Pater is right, what is true of music also holds for the other arts. Our problem is therefore to see why Pater places music in that supreme position among the arts; and then examine his contention in the light of whatever evidence is available, but particularly from that of painting.

#### 1

#### MUSIC AS THE MEASURE OF THE ARTS

Pater advances his theory in the essay on "The School of Giorgione" in the volume on *The Renaissance*. Each art, he states, has its own unique, distinctive quality which is untranslatable into any other art. This distinctive quality of each art is derived from its sensuous material, as sounds in music, colors in painting, rhythmical words in poetry. Pater does not maintain that the skillful handling of this sensuous material is all there is to art, but only that this material gives the art its peculiar flavor. The material imposes a responsibility upon the artist to be true to its inherent nature and not to force it into moulds for which it is intrinsically unsuited. A painting may be poetical, and a poem pictorial, but there is in the painting a true pictorial charm and in the poem a true poetical quality in which lies their essential artistic significance.

But each art also steps over its own boundary lines into that of another art, "not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces." What these forces are that are obtained by one art from another Pater does not indicate. Nevertheless, the implication is that a painting does not lose by trespassing upon poetry nor a poem by stepping over into painting, but as a poem or a painting

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each has its untranslatable charm. A "tone poem," if great as an art work, is not such for its poetic quality, but for its music, nor is the greatness of a "musical poem" due to its music, but "comes of an inventive handling of rhythmical language—the element of song in the singing; . . ."

But there is even a wider striving than that of each art to the condition of some other art, namely, the aspiring of all art "towards the principle of music; music being the typical, or ideally consummate art, the object of the great *Andersstreben* of all art, of all that is artistic, or partakes of artistic qualities."

What is this artistic quality of music towards which all art aspires but only music fully attains? It is the complete identity of form and content.

For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance—its subject, its given incidents or situation; that the mere matter of a picture—the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape—should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling; that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter:—this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.<sup>1</sup>

Now music achieves this end of all artistic striving to which the other arts only aspire and approximate because of its independence of subject-matter as compared with its sister arts. Music does not depend for its raw stuff on any material other than that of its own making, while painting begins with objects, and poetry works with words which are but symbols for meanings and objects, and both deal with definite subjects or situations or even with moral or political affairs. "In such instances it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form, however much the matter, the subject, the element which is addressed to the mere intelligence, has been penetrated by the informing, artistic spirit." But art is "always striving to be independent

<sup>1</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, copyright 1903 by The Macmillan Company, p. 140. Reprinted by permission.

of mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material;" and it is music "which most completely realizes this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of form and matter. In its ideal, consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire."

### 2

#### THE TESTIMONY OF THE HISTORY OF PAINTING

That this point of view of art and its æsthetic quality falls in well with our own deductions on the nature of the art work as a transformation of the actual by the ideal, so that the two become identical, is a matter of interest rather than a vindication or substantiation of Pater, whose doctrine has met criticism from several quarters. We must go elsewhere for a test of the theory, and we can do no better than resort to the testimony of history.

X That the history of the progress of art, in at least one of its manifold aspects, is a recurring battle between the individuality of genius and some arbitrary authoritarianism, is attested to more or less by all the arts, but particularly so by painting. The creative mind in art, as well as in science, has always been hampered or interfered with in its work by some self-appointed guardians of alleged public welfare, who arrogate to themselves some divinely appointed power over their fellow-beings. The scientist has been persecuted as a blasphemer, while the artist has been ordered and dictated to until quite recent days as to the choice of his subject-matter and its handling. The free and spontaneous development of art has been hampered not only by its servitude to priest, prince, magistrate, general, and even the schoolmaster, but also by art academies and "schools" of art. The effect upon art of the first kind of interference was that it became

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subservient to religious, moralistic, and political objectives, which not only placed a limit upon what material the artist was to deal with, but also how he was to deal with it. He was ordered what to do and how to do it. He had to choose his subject from a field that appealed to those he was dependent upon for his living, and he had to present it in a manner within the comprehension of his patron. The power of the academies and schools, with their political and traditional authority, added to the woes of the artist by their insistence upon craftsmanship and manual dexterity, the products of which were readily marketable. The creative artist whose work deviated from the accepted standard was hounded and persecuted. If the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries produced art works it was because genius will have its way in spite of obstructions of poverty, insult, denunciation, and even persecution. Music happened to be most free of this hampering influence due to the nature of its subject-matter. The priest and the prince could use music, could even order a requiem or an oratorio, but could do nothing more, and the composer was left free to do as his genius dictated. With painting it was quite a different story. The painter begins his work with actual objects or situations and readily attracts the attention of the public censor or of the mob whenever his work falls out of line with traditional morality or existing art standards. It is only within comparatively recent years that artists, other than composers, have begun to enjoy a degree of freedom, with the result that so-called modernistic art shows an increasing tendency to purge itself of non-artistic accretions and impositions. And as it becomes purer art, pure perception, as Pater calls it, it approximates more and more to the condition of music.

### 3

#### THE ÆSTHETIC ELEMENT IN PAINTING

Let us see what this means.

Pater calls music the supreme art because of the complete identity of matter and form. Now, the more literal an art,



the more obvious is the distinction between its subject and the handling of it. And literalness of art objects was precisely what the servitude of the artist to religion, morality, and politics implied, for the more realistic his work the better it served the purpose of adorning a tale or pointing out a precept. But the artist is not a mere craftsman, but a creator. He does not take pride or find joy in manual dexterity and skillfulness, or perfect pictorial reproduction. He labors for adequate expression of significant personal experience. Hence, with the gradual breakdown of ecclesiastical and political dictation the creative artist could follow his own creative bent in the choice of subject and treatment, so that the tone of art began to change from faithful duplication of set themes to free treatment of whatever was artistically significant to the creative mind.

Let us consider some instances.

All modern art is marked by its limitless variety of subject-matter and its freedom from any moralistic implications. Poetry has expanded beyond the traditionally prescribed "nice" subjects of birds, flowers, spring, lovely ladies, moonlight, and rippling brooks, while the free-verse movement is making successful inroads upon the stultifying academic laws of metrical construction, and the novel is becoming progressively naturalistic in spite of the outcries of the humanists that writers have lost all sense of restraint and decorum, and no longer point the moral in their works of virtue rewarded and vice punished. The novelist finds his material wherever he is inclined to do so and paints life with free, broad strokes, being limited only in what he produces by his own creative power. But it is in the plastic arts that the advancing cause of free creative expression is most discernible, with Ingres, Cézanne, and Seurat as the precursors of a renaissance of painting as a pure creative effort, reaching fruition in the lyricism of Picasso and Braque. How did the transformation of painting from the literalism imposed upon it by priest, prince, magistrate, general, and schoolmaster, to pure lyrical, musical expression come about?

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It is traceable, according to adequate authority, to the advent of the camera and the machine, which redeemed painting from its base and accessory functions. Prior to the nineteenth century artisanship was not only an honorable and lucrative occupation, but it was upon the artisan that society depended for the production of goods whose quality was in any manner or shape above that of base utility. The artisan was not an artist, but a primitive machine. And a machine has nothing to do with art. Occasionally there would, of course, arise among the artisans some exceptional fellow with an artistic urge to go beyond the demands of mechanical perfection, but he was a curiosity and treated as such. Hence, we find that in the art preceding that of our own epoch the delimitation between industrial goods and artistic products is not at all clear. True artistic touches, even when present, were covered up by the multifarious utilitarian services demanded of the artist as manufacturer, historian, or political henchman. With the advent of mechanical devices the artisan has largely disappeared, and even when he operates he is not confused with the artist, who could now obey his creative impulse due to his emancipation from the stifling influence of commercialism. Thus the modern artist became a free agent and could turn his attention from court, church, and market place, to nature that offered him an endless array of material for his creative purposes.

What did the modern artist do with his new opportunities? What turn did painting take just so soon as the painter came into his own? In the answer to this question lies the test of Pater's claim for music. Is modern painting musical in quality? Let authorities answer this question.

In his book, *The Modern Movement in Art*, Mr. Wilenski points out that for the Renaissance criterion of art in the service of religion, modern art has substituted that of the nature of art itself. This intrinsic criterion was operative no doubt, in all the great artists of Western Europe for the last five hundred years, but it is the modern artist who can follow it completely, unhampered. He writes:

Medieval art in Western Europe was a complex cord composed of many strands. Justified fundamentally in the artist's mind by the idea of service to religion it embraced a number of activities within itself. As Émile Male has pointed out, the art of the early Gothic Cathedrals, which represented the culmination of medieval art in Western Europe, was the mirror not only of the religion, but also the mirror of the scientific and the moral concepts of the medieval Christian world, of that world's experience of past and contemporary history, and of its perception of architectural form.

One by one, since those cathedrals were built, these constituents have been separated and made distinct in Western European thought. The religious fundament was the first constituent to be withdrawn. Religion first began to be thought of as a thing distinct from art; and the service of religion became an activity of a separate kind. Science, morals, social history, as time passed, followed the path taken by religion. Today each is in a separate compartment withdrawn from art. Specialists who make a living by specialization have attained to a detailed and elaborate experience in each and all these fields that is quite outside the artist's range. We do not look to the artist today for our science, our ethics, or our history any more than for our religion. Today, moreover, we have the camera, the cinematograph, and camera-sculpture developed by specialists into instruments of such recording skill that we have learned to look to them for records of our mechanical vision.<sup>1</sup>

What is the idea of art that has been substituted for art in the service of religion? Mr. Wilenski answers that it is the idea of architecture as the typical art, and it is of germane interest here that architecture has been called frozen music. The art of architecture, as distinct from mere utilitarian building, is the expression of formal experience. The modern artist's ideal is to create architectural pictorial form:

A basic idea of the modern movement is . . . that the business of the architectural artist is fundamentally the same as that of the architect. It is held as a first principle that the artist must be free, as the architect is free, to introduce representational details or not; that representational details are no more a necessary part of a picture or a piece of sculpture than they are a necessary part of a cathedral. It is also held that if the painter or sculptor decides to introduce such details he must do so by the architect's procedure; that he cannot achieve an architectural construction by degrading his perception to

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Wilenski, *The Modern Movement in Art*, Frederick A. Stokes Co., p. 7.

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mechanical vision and imitating the momentary appearance of some fragment at some point of time and space. It is held that he must not copy fragments in photographically naturalistic technique, but must (a) reinforce his vision to actual or imagined perception; (b) perceive not fragments, but formal relations; and (c) force his perception to the point of creating a definite, organized, and complete formal symbol compounded of smaller symbols homogeneous and consistent one with another and with the symbol as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

But what is this artistic perception? The artist, says Mr. Wilenski, does not paint what he sees, but what he perceives. Perception is personal, individual; seeing is impersonal, general. We all see a tree, but the tree does not look the same to all of us; it does not look to the lumberman as it does to the painter, nor to any one painter as to another. So the architectural form that the painter creates of the tree, landscape, or human face, is the unique perception of the artist. The artist is simply the man who possesses a higher degree of artistic perception than the normal man, and "who has the power to realize his actual or imagined perception (of any calibre) to the point of inventing symbolic concrete form to express it."

Let us turn to another authority on the modern movement in painting. Mr. Bell discusses modern art with the bias of his theory of significant form, yet, his account of its salient quality as art is not unlike that of Mr. Wilenski. Of Post-Impressionism he writes:

There is no mystery about Post-Impressionism; a good Post-Impressionist picture is good for precisely the same reasons that any other picture is good. The essential quality in art is permanent. Post-Impressionism, therefore, implies no violent break with the past. It is merely a deliberate rejection of certain hampering traditions of modern growth. It does deny that art need ever take orders from the past; but that is not a badge of Post-Impressionism; it is the commonest mark of vitality. Even to speak of Post-Impressionism as a movement may lead to misconceptions; the habit of speaking of movements at all is rather misleading. The stream of art has never run utterly dry: it flows through the ages, now broad now narrow, now deep now shallow, now rapid now sluggish: its color is changing always. But who can

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

set a mark against the exact point of change? In the earlier nineteenth century the stream ran very low. In the days of the Impressionists, against whom the contemporary movement is in some ways a reaction, it had already become copious. Any attempt to dam and imprison this river, to choose out a particular school or movement and say: "Here art begins and there it ends," is a pernicious absurdity. That way Academization lies. At this moment there are not above half a dozen good painters alive who do not derive, to some extent, from Cézanne. Superficially, I say, because, essentially, all good art is of the same movement: there are only two kinds of art, good and bad. Nevertheless, the division of the stream into reaches, distinguished by differences of manner, is intelligible and, to historians at any rate, useful. The reaches also differ from each other in volume; one period of art is distinguished from another by its fertility. For a few fortunate years or decades the output of considerable art is great. Suddenly it ceases; or slowly it dwindles: a movement has exhausted itself. How far a movement is made by the fortuitous synchronization of a number of good artists, and how far the artists are helped to the creation of significant form by the pervasion of some underlying spirit of the age, is a question that can never be decided beyond cavil. But however the credit is to be apportioned—and I suspect it should be divided about equally—we are justified, I think, looking at the history of art as a whole, in regarding such periods of fertility as distinct parts of that whole. Primarily, it is as a period of fertility in good art and artists that I admire the Post-Impressionist movement. Also, I believe that the principles which underlie and inspire that movement are more likely to encourage artists to give of their best, and to foster a good tradition, than any of which modern history bears record. But my interest in this movement, and my admiration for much of the art it has produced, does not blind me to the greatness of the products of other movements; neither, I hope, will it blind me to the greatness of any new creation of form even though that novelty may seem to imply a reaction against the tradition of Cézanne.

Like all sound revolutions, Post-Impressionism is nothing more than a return to first principles. Into a world where the painter was expected to be either a photographer or an acrobat burst the Post-Impressionist, claiming that, above all things, he should be an artist. Never mind, said he, about representation or accomplishment—mind about creating significant form, mind about art. Creating a work of art is so tremendous a business that it leaves no leisure for catching a likeness or displaying address. Every sacrifice made to representation is something stolen from art. Far from being the insolent kind of revolution it is vulgarly supposed to be, Post-Impressionism is, in fact, a return, not indeed to any particular tradition of painting,

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but to the great tradition of visual art. It sets before every artist the ideal set before themselves by the primitives, an ideal which, since the twelfth century, has been cherished only by exceptional men of genius. Post-Impressionism is nothing but the reassertion of the first commandment of art—Thou shalt create form. By this assertion it shakes hands across the ages with the byzantine primitives and with every vital movement that has struggled into existence since the arts began.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Roger Fry, in summarizing the modern movement as “the re-establishment of purely æsthetic criteria in place of the criterion of conformity to appearance—the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony,” writes further that:

So long as representation was regarded as the end of art, the skill of the artist and his proficiency in this particular feat of representation were regarded with an admiration which was in fact mainly non-æsthetic. With the new indifference to representation we have become much less interested in skill and not at all interested in knowledge. We are thus no longer cut off from a great deal of barbaric and primitive art the very meaning of which escaped the understanding of those who demanded a certain standard of skill in representation before they could give serious consideration to a work of art. In general the effect of the movement has been to render the artist intensively conscious of the æsthetic unity of the work of art, but singularly naïve and simple as regards other considerations.<sup>2</sup>

The foregoing accounts of the nature of the modern movement in painting speak one language, and that language is not much unlike that of Pater in designating music as being the measure of the arts, since the result of the substitution of the idea of art as the painter's objective for that of service to religion is that, irrespective of its label as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, or whatever else, modern painting tends strongly towards the complete identification of matter and form. Any painting executed in the spirit of the modern movement fits in well with Pater's contention that its significance is neither literary nor poetical, but lies in “that pictorial quality which lies between (unique pledge of the possession of the

<sup>1</sup> *Art*, Stokes, pp. 41-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Vision and Design*, Brentano's, p. 12.

pictorial gift) the inventive or creative handling of pure line and color, which, . . . is quite independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject it accompanies." When a painting is neither romantic, nor descriptive, nor representational, it is reduced to pure form, drawing, and coloring, in which, "the mere matter of a picture—the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape—" is "nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling;" and in which this form, this mode of handling, therefore, becomes the end, and penetrates every part of the matter. Such a painting is, of course, not music, due to its sensuous material, from which it receives its distinctive æsthetic quality, but it parallels music in its identity of form and matter.

### 4

#### THE ÆSTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN PAINTING

If the artistic quality in painting is parallel to that of music, does the same hold for the æsthetic experience in plastic art? In answer to this question we find that artists who have expressed themselves on this point whether directly or indirectly speak of the æsthetic attitude towards a painting as do Gurney and Hanslick about music. Pater expresses himself very definitely that "In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a moment, on the wall or floor:" while Bell, in distinguishing between the æsthetic and non-æsthetic spectator, writes that "people who can not feel pure æsthetic emotion remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what the subject of a painting is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colors. . . . They are concerned only with lines and colors, their relations and quantities and qualities; but from these they win an emotion more profound and far more sublime than any that can be given by the description of facts and ideas."

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Roger Fry gives us a very clear-cut account of the difference between the purely æsthetic feeling and "the whole complex of feelings which may and generally do accompany the æsthetic feeling when we regard a work of art," by taking an example of what he means from Raphael's *Transfiguration*. He writes:

It is at once apparent that this picture makes a very complex appeal to the mind and feelings. To those who are familiar with the Gospel story of Christ it brings together in a single composition two different events which occurred simultaneously at different places, the Transfiguration of Christ and the unsuccessful attempt of the Disciples during His absence to heal the lunatic boy. This at once arouses a number of complex ideas about which the intellect and feelings may occupy themselves. Goethe's remark on the picture is instructive from this point of view. "It is remarkable," he says, "that any one has ever ventured to query the essential unity of such a composition. How can the upper part be separated from the lower? The two form one whole. Below the suffering and the needy, above the powerful and helpful—mutually dependent, mutually illustrative."

It will be seen at once what an immense complex of feelings interpenetrating and mutually affecting one another such a work sets up in the mind of a Christian spectator, and all this merely by the content of the picture, its subject, the dramatic story it tells.

Now if our Christian spectator has also a knowledge of human nature he will be struck by the fact that these figures, especially in the lower group, are all extremely incongruous with any idea he is likely to have formed of the people who surrounded Christ in the Gospel narrative. And according to his prepossessions he is likely to be shocked or pleased to find instead of the poor and unsophisticated peasants and fisher-folk who followed Christ, a number of noble, dignified, and academic gentlemen in improbable garments and purely theatrical poses. Again the representation merely as representation, will set up a number of feelings and perhaps of critical thoughts dependent upon innumerable associated ideas in the spectator's mind.

Now all these reactions to the picture are open to any one who has enough understanding of natural form to recognize it when represented adequately. There is no need for him to have any particular sensibility to form as such.

Let us now take for our spectator a person highly endowed with the special sensibility to form, who feels the intervals and relations of forms as a musical person feels the intervals and relations of tones,



and let us suppose him either completely ignorant of, or indifferent to, the Gospel story. Such a spectator will be likely to be immensely excited by the extraordinary power of co-ordination of many complex masses in a single inevitable whole, by the delicate equilibrium of many directions of line. He will at once feel that the apparent division into two parts is only apparent, that they are co-ordinated by a quite peculiar power of grasping the possible correlations. He will almost certainly be immensely excited and moved, but his emotion will have nothing to do with the emotions which we have discussed hitherto, since in this case we have supposed our spectator to have no clue to them.

It is evident then that we have the possibility of infinitely diverse reactions to a work of art. We may imagine, for instance, that our pagan spectator, though entirely unaffected by the story, is yet conscious that the figures represent men, and that their gestures are indicative of certain states of mind and, in consequence, we may suppose that according to an internal bias his emotion is either heightened or hindered by the recognition of their rhetorical insincerity. Or we may suppose him to be so absorbed in purely formal relations as to be indifferent even to this aspect of the design as representation. We may suppose him to be moved by the pure contemplation of the spatial relations of plastic volumes. It is when we have got to this point that we seem to have isolated this extremely elusive æsthetic quality which is the one constant quality of all works of art, and which seems to be independent of all the prepossessions and associations which the spectator brings with him from his past life.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most lucid and vivid account of the painter's attitude towards the world is given by Whistler in his *Ten O'Clock*. He attacks the critic or writer who brings about a misconception of the art of painting by considering it from a literary point of view as a hieroglyph, symbol, or story. Such a point of view, Whistler holds, is a degradation of art, for art is neither science nor morality, but is "selfishly occupied with her own perfection only—having no desire to teach—seeking and finding the beautiful in all conditions and in all times," as did Rembrandt in the Jew's quarter of Amsterdam, or Tintoret and Paul Veronese among the Venetians or Velasquez at the Court of Philip.

No reformers were these great men—no improvers of the ways of others! Their productions alone were their occupation and, filled with

<sup>1</sup> *Vision and Design*, pp. 296–299.

## Art and Beauty

the poetry of their science, they required not to alter their surroundings,—for, as the Law of their Art was revealed to them, they saw, in the development of their work, that beauty which, to them was as much a matter of certainty and triumph as is to the astronomer the verification of the result, foreseen with the light given to him alone. In all this, their world was completely severed from that of their fellow-creatures with whom sentiment is mistaken for poetry and for whom there is no perfect work that shall not be explained by the benefit conferred upon themselves.

Nor is the painter a botanist or copyist of nature, but “one who sees in her choice selection of brilliant tones and delicate tints, suggestions of future harmonies,” and “in the long curve of the narrow leaf, corrected by the straight, tall stem, he learns how grace is wedded to dignity, how strength enhances sweetness, that elegance shall be the result,” who sees “in the citron wing of the pale butterfly, with its dainty spots of orange . . . the stately halls of fair gold, with their slender, saffron pillars, and is taught how the delicate drawing upon the walls shall be traced in tender tones of orpiment, and repeated by the base in notes of graver hue.” The painter is the artist whose work surpasses what is called nature, “and the Gods stand by and marvel, and perceive how far away more beautiful is the Venus of Melos than was their own Eve.”

The nature of the painter's experience of the world about him and the æsthetic quality in a painting constitute the theme of Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*. In one section of the poem the painter and the prior are discussing the significance of the painter's art. The painter is speaking:

The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,  
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!  
—For what? do you feel thankful, aye or no,  
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,  
The mountain round it and the sky above,  
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,  
These are the frame to? What's it all about?  
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,  
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.

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But why not do as well as say,—paint these  
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime  
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works  
Are here already—nature is complete:  
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)  
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."  
For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love  
First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
And so they are better, painted—better to us,  
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—  
God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,  
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,  
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,  
If I drew higher things with the same truth!  
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,  
It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,  
Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good:  
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.  
"Aye, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"  
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain  
It does not say to folks—remember matins,  
Or, mind you fast next Friday." Why, for this  
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,  
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,  
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since  
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:  
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"  
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—  
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,  
The pious people have so eased their own  
When coming to say prayers there in a rage:  
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
Expect another job this time next year,  
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—  
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

### PURE ART AND RICH ART

The experience of beauty in painting, as is sufficiently indicated by the foregoing pronouncements, is the experience of beauty in music. The beauty of tonal structure is also the beauty of the structure of line and color. Both are intrinsic, self-sufficient, inherent experiences, differing only in the sensuous material from which the experience is derived. It is therefore true, and not, as Pater maintains, a mistake, to regard poetry, music, painting, and all arts, "as but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colors, in painting—of sound in music—of rhythmical words, in poetry." The one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought of all the arts is beauty, a disinterested, intrinsically significant experience. But this does not mean that the sensuous material of the arts is irrelevant to the experience, and produces no effect upon it. An art work, we found, is the translation, or transformation of the commonplace, the old, into the uniquely personal new. The old is the sensuous material of the new, and since the sensuous material of each art differs, the new will have in it the flavor of the old. Now an intellectual idea may be translated or put into different languages without changing its structure, but each language will impose upon the idea a quality of its own. In substance the idea remains the same, but it differs in taste, in flavor. Some flavors are purer than others, while some are richer. Sweetness varies from the cloying to the sweet-sour, due to the ingredients of the sweet substance. Now beauty has varied ingredients in the sensuous material of the arts, but it remains beauty in all the arts, differing however in flavor. In music the flavor of beauty is purest, but because it is purest it is also least rich, while in the other arts it is less pure, but for that reason more rich. We may therefore classify the arts not only in accordance with their purity, with music at the top, but also as to their richness, with music at the bottom.

To see clearly what this means let us remind ourselves once again of the nature of the art work. Art is not detached from life, but arises out of life. Nor is art but a skillful representation of life, but a transformation of life. The nature of this transformation is a transubstantiation, a change in substance, a transference of significance from one level of being to another level of being. In art the actual and the ideal change places on the level of reality. An art work is the transformation of the actual into the ideal, where the two fuse so that the ideal becomes the actual and the actual becomes the ideal, matter and idea fuse, by matter becoming the vehicle for idea, and thereby suffused with idea. Now it follows necessarily from the nature of the art work as a transformation of the actual into the ideal, that an art work whose subject-matter or material is most actual, that has its roots most deeply imbedded in life, has therefore a richer significance as a transformation, while the art work whose material is least actual, or farthest removed from practical life, will also have least value as a transformation. Such an art work will be purer, since the actual most resembles the ideal, but for that very reason it will also be the poorer.

Now it is the material of music that presents to the creative imagination the purest subject-matter for its operations. Tones have in them the least admixture of practical life. A tonal sound has least survival value. A noise will put an animal on its guard. It will frighten it. A tone will only please it or displease it by its quality. Tones belong to the realm of pure feeling. They are valued for themselves as tones, not for any symbolic meaning that they convey. The material of music is thus in itself æsthetic, hence music is the purest of all the arts. A tone represents nothing but itself, and has least connection with anything practical or utilitarian. All the composer does is combine this already pure material into artistically significant forms, and hence matter and form in music are most identical. A melody is a pure form. Its content is its form and its form is its content. A change in one means a change in the other. We can, of course, force a

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content upon it, read into it stories or pictures. But when we do so we know that they are extraneous and not inherent in the music. Music suggests no more than a mood, but even the mood is inherent, intrinsic in the form, for any change in the form brings about a change in the mood.

But the case is quite different with the plastic and verbal arts. Their material is of the earth. In a painting it is always possible to distinguish between the subject-matter and the handling, for the handling may even be changed yet the subject-matter, the object painted, remains more or less the same. The painter deals with familiar material, and whatever he puts on canvas, no matter how artistically, carries a suggestion of utility, namely, *what* it is apart from *how* it is. The composer has never been accused of being untrue to nature, or of distorting nature, as has been the recurrent case with the painter. From the composer we do not expect realism, but rather condone it in him as an affectation when he tries it, as in program music. But because the painter comes close to that with which we are in daily contact we are disappointed if his painting presents us with anything more than a prettified reproduction of our familiar surroundings. Hence, when the painter does succeed in detaching us from our utilitarian attitude and presents us with a product that becomes significant to us as idealized form, he has accomplished a feat of imagination superior to that of the composer. He has given us a richer experience than the composer in that he has opened our eyes to the beauty inherent in our common experience.

The artist in the verbal arts goes even beyond the painter in richness of his art, for his material is of the most intimate personal, realistic nature. Words, actions, thoughts, feelings, personal contacts, and relations, are the very stuff of our being. We are they and they are we. A disinterested attitude towards these means a detachment from ourselves, the rarest of rare occurrences. The dramatic and epic poem, the novel and drama, arise from the very stuff of human existence, and when an art work in these spheres does succeed in creating in us an experience of beauty, it is of the richest quality, for we

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have been taken out of our very selves for the time being and have caught a glimpse of the realm of life in its pure cosmic significance. No music or painting can rock our deep-most being as can a great poem, novel, or drama. When we are touched by one of these æsthetically, the experience is of the nature of a rebirth, a regeneration, a rediscovery of the self of selves in our being. It is of such experiences that Browning wrote:

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!  
But not quite so sunk that moments,  
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled-up honors perish,  
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,  
While just this or that poor impulse  
Which for once had play unstified  
Seems the sole work of a lifetime  
That away the rest have trifled.

So, although music is the measure of the arts, in that all the arts seek to transform the material into the ideal, and music is the purest of the arts because the material and ideal in it are most identical, the other arts are the richer, in that their ideal is built upon a material that touches human life at the very foundation of biological existence, in that they tap the very sources of the stream of life which they cleanse of débris, muck, and pollution poured into it by the exigencies of physical survival.



## CHAPTER IX

### POETRY

Poetry, fiction, and drama use a common material, language, and therefore a study of the nature of any one of the three is also an examination of the nature of the other two. We can have a poem in dramatic form, a drama in poetic form, and a novel which is either dramatic or poetic. They differ not in substance but in garb. Since words are the material of these arts the study of the nature of a verbal art work reduces itself to an inquiry as to the nature of language and what the poet, whom we shall use as the typical verbal artist, does to it in transmuting this material into art.

#### 1

#### THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

The nature of language is the nature of human thought and human action, for language is no more nor less than the tool of both of these aspects of human nature. A word is either the shadow of an act or of an idea. Verbal sounds have no meaning in themselves. They are the channels, the media for the expression or communication of that which lies outside of themselves. Plato has made clear to us how easy it is to deceive ourselves with words, to labor under an impression that just because we can utter a sound we also necessarily know what we are talking about. Words may be empty vessels and pour out no more than hollow sounds. We find it simple to define some words and extremely difficult to define others. The reason is that the definition of a word is the experience it records. Hence the definiteness of a definition of a word is in proportion to the vividness of the experience, its meaning. We readily define chair because of our frequent experience with the object of which the sound is a symbol. We define it in terms of our experience, as an object



to sit in. But a definition of terms like truth, or virtue, or honesty, or beauty is a most severe trial because of the haziness or complete lack of experiences of this nature.

What, then, is the source of the meaning of words? What is the relationship between words, things, and actions?

Meaning begins as behavior and culminates as language. There is meaning as behavior and meaning as language. And meaning as language is the consequence of meaning as behavior. There can be behavior without language, but there could be no meaning as language without behavior. The source of the meaning of words is thus behavior. The relationship between behavior and things gives rise to the meaning of words. Meaning is inherent neither in things nor in words, but both things and words obtain their meaning from behavior.

What is the meaning of a thing or a situation? The cat sees the dog and it runs away. It sees a saucer of milk and it runs towards it. I see one person approaching me and I smile. I see another coming towards me and I frown. The meaning of the dog to the cat is to run away. The meaning of the saucer of milk is to run towards it. The meaning of one person to me is to smile, of another person to frown.

If the dog or milk aroused no action in the cat they would have no meaning, as dog or milk. If the two persons aroused no action in me they would have no meaning as persons. From these simple illustrations we conclude that whenever a thing or situation becomes a cue, a signal, for a definite reaction, that thing or situation becomes meaningful, and the meaning of the thing or situation is the behavior it provokes. The thing or situation may have different meanings on different occasions, but on each occasion its meaning is the behavior. The behavior may be outer or inner, muscular or mental, an act or a thought. But things or situations that cause neither inner nor outer behavior possess no meaning.

Now what about the relationship between sounds and things?

The cat hears the bark of the dog and it runs away from the

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source of the sound. It hears some one utter the sound "milk" and it runs to the place where it usually finds the saucer. I hear the voice of one person and I smile. I hear that of another and I frown. What is the meaning of the sounds? Again, the behavior provoked by them. The sounds have become substitutes for the thing or situation, and the meaning of the sounds is that of the thing or situation. A word is thus a sound that has become a substitute for a thing or a situation. Language is a substitute stimulus for behavior, its meaning being the behavior produced by the original stimulus. When the world does not stimulate mental or muscular activity, when it does not recall past experience of some sort, it has no meaning. A foreign language with which we are unfamiliar has no meaning because the sounds do not serve as clues for past events.

Language is therefore, in its basic nature, a utility, an instrument, a tool of the business of living. It is one with things and situations of the everyday world of life. We could get along without it, but it is a great convenience to which we have become so accustomed that we deem it a necessity. The business of mere existence could readily go on, as it does among animals, without language. We would even save ourselves a great deal of trouble in not deceiving ourselves and others by the use of empty sounds.

### 2

#### THE NATURE OF POETRY

This is the nature of the material of the verbal arts. It is no different from the nature of the material of the painter or composer, excepting that it deals more directly and intimately with life than do colors or tones. But for that very reason poetry, drama, and fiction are also the richest of the arts.

Now what does the poet do with this commonplace material? How do art works arise from it?

Let us ask of poetry itself. We will take two poems and agree for the purpose of our inquiry that they are both beau-

tiful. We will ask the poems to tell us wherein lies their beauty. Our first sample is the famous lyric that forms the opening lines of Byron's *The Bride of Abydos*.

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle  
 Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,  
 Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,  
 Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?  
 Know ye the land of the cedar and vine  
 Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;  
 Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,  
 Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in their bloom;  
 Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit  
 And the voice of the nightingale never is mute—

.....

Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,  
 And all, save the spirit of man is divine?  
 'Tis the land of the East; 'tis the clime of the Sun—  
 Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?  
 Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell  
 Are the hearts that they bear, and the tales that they tell.

Wherein lies the beauty of these lines? What does it do to us? Does it tell us anything? Does it convey any meaning to us? Does it communicate any ideas? If we tried to tell some one about it what could we say? The answer is, we could say extremely little about its ideational meaning. But it does have a meaning in that it grips us, it affects us. In what way does it affect us? It informs us of nothing. It does not lead us to think. We carry no idea away from it. There is nothing in it we could translate into our own words. It could not be translated into another language without ruining it. But what then does it do, for it does grip us? It plays on our ears, eyes, tastes, and odors. We hear it, taste it, see it, and smell it. It is a melody, a painting of a landscape, an odor, a flavor. It ravishes us like a melody, a pastoral scene, a perfume, a delicate wine. In the ordinary sense of telling, it tells nothing. It just rouses us to a heightened consciousness of living. And it does so principally through its melodic quality, its meter, rhyme, and rhythm. If its melodic quality

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were eliminated, all its visual, olfactory, and gustatory effects would vanish. In a word, then, its æsthetic quality, its beauty, is its music. It is no more nor less than the music of verbal sounds. There is then poetry whose æsthetic substance lies predominantly in the musical potentialities of the pure rhythmic sound of words. This is the lyric.

Our second example is from Browning:

All that I know  
Of a certain star,  
Is, it can throw  
(Like the angled spar)  
Now a dart of red,  
Now a dart of blue,  
Till my friends have said  
They would fain see, too,  
My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:  
They must solace themselves with the saturn above it.  
What matter to me if their star is a world?  
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

These lines are also musical, and we may find their æsthetic quality in their music. But they are more than that. We are impressed with something more than the meter, rhyme, and rhythm of the language. The language conveys something to us, and the poet is giving expression through the musical lines to an idea, an experience. We can talk about this poem. We can discuss its idea in words of our own. The idea could be translated into a different language, and perfectly so. The beauty of the lines might be lost, but the idea would remain. The poet tells us of a great, vital personal experience. He tells us of an ineffable, life-transforming vision that is entirely his own, that is uniquely significant. The words are the medium for the idea. The idea is the matter of which the words are the form, the two blending into one whole. The substance of the poem is the idea. This is poetry as dramatic, epic, narrative.

Poetry, as art, is then either predominantly verbal melody or predominantly poetic idea.

3

POETRY AS VERBAL MUSIC

As verbal music, a poem is a sequence of words so arranged in meter, rhythm, rhyme, and versification as to produce an organic form of sound that becomes significantly effective as such. Words lend themselves to melodic sequences in that inherently they are pure sound, possessing, as sounds, all the material resources of tones: pitch, intensity, duration, quality, or color, and the orchestral effects of assonance and alliteration. When treated artistically they can therefore parallel a pure melody in creating a mood. The poet of verbal music constructs a musical pattern of words that becomes a source of delight, that moves us as a melody does. It is thus verbal music that Pater calls "at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry," just because its effect of perfection, of completeness, does not depend on an idea expressed, but rather "on a certain suffusion or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires, or reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding."

The poet, as pure artist, is thus the architect of verbal sounds. He is a composer in words, making use of all possible resources that words possess as tonal material. Some words or verbal combinations have greater poetic possibilities than others. Technical terms or technical phrases which are arbitrarily invented for definite purposes are not only non-poetic, but anti-poetic. Similarly with colloquialisms and words with established ludicrous or trivial associations. On the other hand, there are words whose very fringe of associations enhances their poetic value, in that they suggest images, feelings, or meanings which are in themselves beautiful. They possess imaginative significance. In the words of Tennyson:

All the charm of all the Music often flowering in a lovely word.

Then there are phrases rich in imaginative, contemplative value, as these lines from Shakespeare's xxxth sonnet:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past.

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The beauty of the *Psalms* lies chiefly in this magic of words and phrases creative of moods of repose and assurance:

Then they are glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

The lines speak to us as does a serene or joyful melody.

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul?  
And why art thou disquieted within me?  
Hope thou in God:  
For I shall yet praise him  
Who is the health of my countenance.  
And my God.

. . . . .

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night unto night sheweth knowledge:  
Their voice cannot be heard.  
Their line is gone out through all the earth.  
And their words to the end of the world.

"Forlorn!" Keats cries, "the very word is like a bell." But its beauty is not its mere tonal quality, but more so the reminiscent mood of forlornness. The sensuous quality of words is different from that of tones, and the lyric poem, although a melody, is yet more and less than a melody. It has the melodic effect of a melody, but it is less than a melody. It has the mood effect of a melody, but more so. There is a definiteness in the verbal melody that is lacking in the tonal melody. This definiteness is due to the greater tangibility of words as compared with tones. Words, being principally a tool of action, even their sensuous quality comes to closer grips with life than that of tones. So that although the lyric poem approaches music in its identity of matter and form, its effect is more solid, substantial, just because its matter is its form, while in a melody the form is its matter.

The musical element of a poem, giving it its sensuous beauty, thus bringing it close to music, is due to the rhythmic quality inherent in speech. There is a natural tendency in us

for the rhythmic organization of sounds. If we repeat a series of haphazard sounds several times they will inevitably arrange themselves into a rhythmic pattern of some sort, to which a time-signature could be affixed. This is the basis of meter. A meter is to verse what a measure is to music. Meter again arranges itself into larger units, like musical measures into phrases. These larger units form the rhythm of the poem. The rhythm has a tempo which is derived from the predominance of long or short vowels of the syllables. In Browning's lines:

Marching along,  
Fifty score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen,  
Singing this song.

the tempo is slow as compared with the following:

Out of the dust  
Soaring alone  
In composure of flight  
Skylark of stone.

The meter in both is the same. In musical notation their time-signature would be 2/4. Dividing them into measures they look alike:

/Mar-ching a-/long/  
/Fif-ty score/strong/  
/Great-hearted/gentlemen/  
/Singing this/song/

/Out of the/dust/  
/Soa-ring a-/lone/  
/In composure of/flight/  
/Sky-lark of/stone/

The number of "notes" is the same in each case, only that in the fifth "measure" of the second there are four eighth notes, while in the same measure of the first there is one quarter note and two eighth notes. But the tempo of the first is slower than that of the second. The tempo influences the mood effect of the melody in both verse and music, the slow move-

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ment being more serene, the faster more gay. There is also a "major" and a "minor" key in verse as in music. The meter of the opening stanza of Gray's *Elegy* and Wordsworth's *My Heart Leaps Up* is the same. Musically, the time-signature of both would be 3/4. But the mood effect of the first is that of a grave, lingering melody in a minor key, while the effect of the second is more in keeping with the mood of a major key.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began:  
So is it now I am a man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!  
The Child is father of the Man;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Poets have always experimented with the melodic possibilities of words, but particularly so within recent years with the advent of the free-verse movement. The movement is, in fact, an attempt to expand the musical resources of language beyond the confines of classical versification. The advocates of free verse are aiming at pure poetry, or poetry in which form is all and subject-matter nothing. The modernistic poet adjures themes, meanings, ideas, or preachments as a function or even ingredient of poetry. Poetry is not a "criticism of life" as Matthew Arnold called it, which would limit its scope of subject-matter, but the bringing of "a new and heightened consciousness to life," an "added consciousness and increased perception." Such is also the effect of the traditional lyric. But the modernists would limit themselves neither to the "pretty" themes of the lyric nor to its form. Their aim is this heightened consciousness of the whole possible range of experience in whatever manner it can be brought about, even to the disregard of grammatic form.



Here's a little mouse) and  
What does he think about, i  
wonder as over this  
floor (quietly with

bright eyes) drifts (nobody  
can tell because  
Nobody knows, or why  
jerks Here I, here,  
gr)oo) ving the room's Silence) this like  
a littlest  
poem a  
(with wee ears and see?

tail frisks)  
(gonE)  
"mouse" . . . . .

The metrical basis of free verse is, in the words of Amy Lowell, "unrhymed cadence." It has discarded a strict metrical system for the "organic rhythm" of the speaking voice, made necessary by breathing. Free verse differs from ordinary prose rhythms "by being more curved, and containing more stress." The unrhymed cadence does not consist in a mere chopping of prose lines into certain lengths, but "is constructed upon mathematical and absolute laws of balance and time." The objective is to "heat up an emotion until it burns white-hot," and unrhymed cadence is most effective in doing this. Since it is this heating up of an emotion to white-hot that poetry strives after, the subject or theme is irrelevant, the treatment the all-essential. There is no such thing as a poetical subject. There is only poetical form, for whatever the subject, its poetic significance is the heightened perception, the white-hot emotion that it generates. From the point of view of the modernistic poet, this heating up of emotion has been the substance of all poetry through the ages, its channels only being changed from age to age. Wordsworth was blamed for poetizing about commonplace things. Today the poet is condemned for resorting to kitchen utensils:

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Now the old copper Basin suddenly  
Rattled and tumbled from the shelf,  
Bumping and crying, "I can fall by myself."

But whether a primrose or a pot for theme, the poet is the architect of words, and can evolve a verbal form whose effect will be an enhanced experience of living, whether the form be the traditional lyric or the modernistic unrhymed cadence.

### 4

#### POETRY AS POETIC IDEA

Such is poetry as music. But the utmost that poetry as music can accomplish is in being a lesser music. And as lesser music it is also a lesser art. Yet poetry must be more than a lesser art. The poet is not merely the imitator, in words, of the composer. He is a creator using verbal material with all of its living implications of action and thought for his raw stuff. Poetry is an art in its own rights and stands on its own feet. Its merits are not borrowed from any other art. Poetry can not do what music does, nor does the poet primarily aim at musical effects. His music is a by-product, a consequence, of an objective that is purely poetical. If the lyric were no more than music it would be but imitation music. But a lyric is more than that. It has a quality that can never be attributed to music, a quality that is due to and derived from its sensuous material, language. And language, although it lends itself to tonal treatment, is yet more than tones. The poetic element of poetry then, its substance, must lie in that which is unique to language and lacking in tones.

What is this substance?

The appeal of tonal art is primarily, if not purely, sensuous. A tone has no more than a sensuous appeal. It has no effect other than affection, as pleasant or unpleasant. Its ideational connotation is nil. We have seen that this is the reason why music is the purest of the arts, but for that reason also the poorest. Even in the most dramatic musical composition the ideational element is at most vague, a mood rather than an idea. Any verbal interpretation of music is, at its best, but

eloquence, at its worst, gibberish. The alleged "fate knocking at the door" motive or theme of Beethoven's **Fifth Symphony**, is irrelevant to the significance of the symphony as music. It is, at best, a mere fancy. People unfamiliar with that legend could never obtain it from the music, and those for whom the music is significant as music have nothing added to their enjoyment from learning its supposed story. The idea of fate is not inherent in the music, is not conveyed by the music, but is read into it, forced upon it from the outside. That is true of all music. Any ideational element is an imposition upon it. Even in program music the story is something apart from the music itself. The composer may be planning his music in accordance with some story, but he is writing music, not a story. And if his music has significance it is as music and not as story or idea. Richard Straus's *Zarathustra* has value as music, not as philosophy.

But, on the other hand, even in the most melodic poem, the lyric, an idea is inherent, due to the ideational nature of language. Apart from idea language is gibberish, no matter how rhythmical in arrangement and structure. Even the purest of lyric poems, therefore, has more ideational content than the most dramatic or poetic music. Herein lies the uniqueness of language as artistic material and the distinguishing point between music and poetry. In some poetry melody predominates over idea, and we call such poetry lyrical. In some poetry idea predominates over melody, and we have dramatic, epic, or narrative poetry. The sonnet, for instance, is more idea than melody. The lyric is more melody than idea. But idea is the meeting ground of both, and constitutes the poetic element of poetry. Melody is essential to both, as is setting to substance. Without melody the sonnet would be prose, while without idea the lyric would be but imitation music. The substance of poetry is, therefore, idea that approaches melody, that is, pure form, as idea, to distinguish it from prosaic idea. The substance of poetry is the poetic idea, and an examination of the nature of the poetic idea is an examination of the nature of poetry.

### THE POETIC IDEA

Prosaic language, we have concluded, is a series of sounds utilized for the expression and conveyance of prosaic, commonplace meaning, the meaning of the sounds being the behavior evoked by a situation calling for action in the interest of the physical welfare of the individual. This is meaning as perception and memory. But there is meaning expressed and conveyed by language that supersedes perception and memory, although built upon and evolved out of perception and memory, by the mental process of imaginative or creative thought which is unique in that it is not common property, shared by all normally constituted persons, but exists only for the person who has evolved it. When such a creative thought is uttered in language adequate for it, and becomes effectively significant as such, in and for itself, it is called a poetic thought or idea, and its utterance in adequate language is a poem.

This definition of the poetic idea calls for examination. We will do so by questioning some poetic ideas as to their substance, how they differ from non-poetic ideas.

Let us take the statement: "There are clouds gathering in the sky, the atmosphere is sultry, and it will probably rain." What are the characteristics of this statement? First of all, it refers to a particular event. It tells something about one aspect of nature, one occurrence, and this occurrence is transient, ephemeral; it comes and goes. The statement is also commonplace. We are thoroughly familiar with it, and it is as true for one person of normal perceptions as for another. It is true not only in that it can be seen as clouds or lightning, heard as thunder, felt as rain, in a word, demonstrated and made manifest by the sense organs, but it is also verified by past experience. It is therefore a factual truth. The statement is furthermore significant, meaningful, in that it is a signal for staying indoors, or getting wet, or seeking shelter, or interfering with plans for a walk, or good for the crops, or breaking a drought. It is a significant factual truth. But no

one would call this statement either poetic or beautiful. The sky may be beautiful. The rain may be beautiful. The thunderstorm may be beautiful. But none of these is poetical. No one would speak of a poetical sky, rain, or thunderstorm. But the statement is neither beautiful nor poetical. What then makes a verbal statement both poetical and beautiful?

Let us take another kind of statement, one from a poem and another from prose.

The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hillside's dew pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world.

Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what shall ye eat, or what shall ye drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

These statements are, by universal consent, both poetic and beautiful. They utter a poetic idea and the idea is beautiful. Wherein lies their poetic quality and why are they beautiful?

The contrast between these utterances and the previous statement about clouds and rain is obvious. Browning and Jesus do not speak of a particular event. Their utterances are universal. Nor are they commonplace. They are neither obvious nor familiar. And they are not true by all the usual criteria of truth. They are not factually true, but rather false. Applied to the business of daily living it is not true that all is well with the world, although God may be in his heaven. Jesus' statement is even more false factually than that of

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Browning, for, put into practice, it would mean starvation and annihilation of life. Nor are these statements demonstrable by sense or verifiable by experience. Both sense and experience prove their falsity. And yet they are true because they are *felt* to be so. They have a tremendous human appeal, and as such they are true. And their truth is at the same time personal and universal. They are true for me, and I feel that they are also true for all other *me's*. All the *me's* become one in them and through them. All the other *me's* become me, and my *me* becomes all other *me's*. The particular becomes the universal and the universal the particular. The words utter a universal truth, which therefore is not true as a fact, but as an ideal. And it is as an ideal that it is true and as such is its appeal. Now it is such an idea, such an ideal idea, that is at once poetic and beautiful, poetic because of its appeal and beautiful because of its intrinsic worth.

What is the nature of the appeal, and why the beauty? For an answer to the first question we go to the poet of poetry, Keats, and for an answer to the second to the exponent of idea as beauty, Plato.

The key to Keats' conception of the nature of poetry is found in his famous pronouncement about the identity of truth and beauty, that

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

while its function is the theme of his Endymion.

That the truth which is also beauty is the ideal truth of poetic idea is manifest from Keats' identification of this truth with the imagination. Both in his poetry and letters Keats dwells constantly on the imagination as the source of all significant experience. In a letter to Bailey, written in November, 1817, he affirms that:

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination! What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—whether it existed before or not,—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty.

Imagination is for him the activating power of poetry, and poetry is the truth seized by the imagination. The truth of the imagination is the supreme reality, all that we need to know or can know. Of such truth the poet, rather than the philosopher, is the seeker and prophet. Keats had little faith in the deductions of reason. Reason is cold and detached. Its conclusions are not vital personal experiences. But the poet, the man of intuition, comes in close personal contact with his world, lends himself freely to experience and thereby becomes the experience. The poet Keats describes as possessing no identity apart from nature. The poetic character has no separate self. In a letter to Richard Woodhouse, written October 27, 1818, the poet writes:

1st. As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime; which is a thing *per se*, and stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—It is everything and nothing. It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated.—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body. The Sun,—the Moon,—the Sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures.—If then he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the Characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess; but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature—How can it, when I have no Nature? When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of Children.

The imagination frees the poet from the chains of earth and

## Art and Beauty

permits him to depart into realms of pure being. In imagination he is free and unfettered.

Is there so small a range  
In the present strength of manhood, that the high  
Imagination can not freely fly  
As she was wont of old? . . .  
. . . Has she not shown us all?  
From the clear space of ether, to the small  
Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning  
Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening  
Of April meadows? Here her altar shone,  
E'en in this isle; and who could paragon  
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise  
Of harmony, to which it aye will poise  
Its mighty self of convoluting sound  
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,  
Eternally around a dizzy void.

But the poet does not flee tangible reality in fancy. He mentally penetrates its surface, freeing it of the débris of perception, and thus comes in touch with its purity of being which is its beauty. To see things as they are, in their naked purity, their absolute truth, is to see them as beauty, and as absolute truth they are pure forms, pure ideas. This is Keats' view of the world, as it is of all poets of idea, whether as poet or as poetic philosopher, like Plato.

But what is the significance of this imaginative conception of the world? Wherein lies its great unusual appeal? Keats attempts an answer in *Endymion* and *Hyperion*, where he contrasts the realm of the tangible, the particular, the perceptual, with that of the intangible, universal, or imaginative.

*Endymion* is a parable of the struggle and striving of the poet after the Beauty that is also Truth. The poem is the spiritual autobiography of Keats, with the Greek shepherd-prince being Keats' poetic self. Of the actual existence of this beauty seized by the imagination, Keats was as convinced as Plato. The imagination did not so much create it, as the mind seized it, attained to it, through the power of imagination. It is created, however, in the sense that, before the



imagination seizes it, it exists only potentially, and not actually. Creation is the process of turning the potential into the actual. In *Endymion* Keats gives an account of the travail in this creative process. It begins with the mind dwelling in the realm of the tangible commonplace, but in which it senses the intangible unique and pure, for which it longs. The mind wishes to dwell below in perception, in the familiar, yet is drawn upwards by the vision of the imagination. To dismiss the imaginative for the perceptual is to cast off a pure for an impure love, because the impure is more readily attainable than the pure. But this is treachery, faithlessness, deception. *Endymion* has his Indian Maid, and she was irresistible. But there was the Moon-Goddess whom he was betraying by his surrender to the earthly love. The Indian Maid was his Heart's Affection, but the Moon-Goddess was the Beauty of Imagination: the actual real and the potentially real side by side, the one possessed, the other beckoning. He is in travail of perplexity. How can he attain the higher and also retain the lower, or retain the lower without betraying the higher? Yet, could the one exist without the other? Can the higher be attained excepting through the lower, or could the lower be recognized as being lower without the vision of the higher? But if the two are related as means are to ends, how can the means become ends? The answer is by transforming the actual real into the potentially real, so that the lower is lost in the higher by becoming incorporated in it and thus transmuted by it. In this manner peace arises out of conflict, calm out of despair, and perplexity becomes assurance. But the one is a condition of the other. As *Endymion* sleeps by the side of the Indian Maid, the Moon-Goddess bends towards him. When he awakes from his dream to the presence of the sleeping Maid beside him, he is perplexed and pained. But as the winged horse takes him upwards—as imagination increases in vividness—the Maid fades, and with her the conflict. The Maid becomes the Goddess, and the prince is at peace. But the peace was gained through the despair. Through hell heaven is attained, the heaven being potentially present in the hell.

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The man is yet to come  
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.  
But few have ever felt how calm and well  
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.

But it is also true that the man who has had no vision of the "deep den of all," who catches no glimpse of the universal and ultimate and pure, can not be aware of the hell of the particular and impure.

However, Endymion does not remain in the quietude of that "deep den of all." Illumination is flash-like. He returns to earth, and to the Maid. And although the "first touch . . . went nigh to kill," although the contrast between the vision and the reality is a shock that well nigh kills, there is security in the tangible and Endymion vows to remain with his earthly love. He dismisses the dream as a dream, not realizing at first that the dream is now the reality and the reality the dream. He realizes this only after the Indian Maid informs him that she can not be his love—for the vision will tolerate naught that is not of its own nature—when he discovers, on his next visit, that the earthly love has been transfigured into the Goddess of the Moon. So Endymion attains perfect repose. The poet attains his culmination when he has evolved his poetic idea from prosaic experience. The poet is alternately despondent and in ecstasy. Endymion is torn between two loves. He is upon the earth, yet not of it. He journeys between hell and heaven. There is no repose in hell because of the vision of heaven, and no peace in heaven because of the memory of hell. But there is the promise of peace in the heaven of idea, and the longing for it turns it into a Truth that is more real than even the reality of fact. When we know this we know all that we need know on earth or ever can know. The poetic idea is the peace-giving idea, and for that reason it is also Truth. Herein lies its significance.

But why is it also Beauty?

Keats' parable of Maid and Goddess is one with Plato's figure in *The Phædrus* of the charioteer driving two winged horses. One of the horses is "noble and of noble breed, and

the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed; and the driving of them of necessity gives a great deal of trouble to him." The ignoble horse is the mortal creature, "a crooked lumbering animal, put together anyhow; he has a short, thick neck; he is flat-faced and of a dark color, with gray eyes and blood-red complexion; the mate of insolence and pride, shag-eared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur." The noble steed is the immortal creature, "upright and cleanly made; he has a lofty neck and an aquiline nose; his color is white, and his eyes dark; he is a lover of honor and modesty and temperance, and the follower of true glory; he needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only." The two horses struggle each to be true to its nature, one pulling downwards to earth, the other upwards to heaven, giving the charioteer much difficulty in handling them. The noble steed draws the charioteer to its own abode of purity, the immortal, the ignoble to its haven of impurity, the mortal. Hence the troubles of the charioteer.

When Plato leaves the figure he tells in psychological terms what he implies by the noble steed, the immortal, and why it is pure, and what he symbolizes by the ignoble animal as mortal and impure, as well as the relationship between them and their relative significance.

Plato conceives of two realms of being or experience. One is the realm of Idea, "visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul," or in the words of Keats, "seized by Imagination," the other the realm of fact, apparent to sense. Throughout his writings he refers to the Idea as the one, the general, the whole, the perfect, the pure, the absolute, and calls this truth, or true reality, while perceptual experience he designates as the many, the particular, the partial, the imperfect, the impure, the relative, constituting not truth, but opinion, not true reality, but its shadow or appearance. What Plato does is reverse our world of values. What we ordinarily call real he calls unreal, and what is for us unreal is for him real. Now on what grounds does he do so? Obviously his criterion for reality is different from the commonly accepted one. The common

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test of reality is tangibility. That of Plato is intangibility. But why so? Because, he contends, it is the intangible, the abstract, the ideational, that gives real significance, real value to the tangible, the concrete, the factual. Let us see in his own words what he means by this.

In a passage in *The Republic* Plato engages in demonstrating to his audience the principle that he who, having a sense of beautiful things, but no sense of absolute beauty, is in a dream state, in that he puts the copy in place of the real object, while he, "who recognizes the existence of absolute beauty and is able to distinguish the idea from the objects which participate in the idea, neither putting the objects in the place of the idea nor the idea in the place of the objects" is awake.

This being premised, I would ask the gentleman who is of opinion that there is no absolute or unchangeable idea of beauty—in whose opinion the beautiful is the manifold—he, I say, your lover of beautiful sights, who cannot bear to be told that the beautiful is one, and the just is one, or that anything is one—to him I would appeal, saying, Will you be so very kind, sir, as to tell us whether, of all these beautiful things, there is one which will not be found ugly; or of the just, which will not be found unjust; or of the holy, which will not also be unholy?

No, he replied; the beautiful will in some point of view be found ugly; and the same is true of the rest.

And may not the many which are doubles be also halves?—doubles, that is, of one thing, and halves of another?

Quite true.

And things great and small, heavy and light, as they are termed, will not be denoted by these any more than by the opposite names?

True; both these and the opposite names will always attach to all of them.

And can any one of those many things which are called by particular names be said to be this rather than not to be this?

He replied: They are like the punning riddles which are asked at feasts or the children's puzzle about the eunuch aiming at the bat, with what he hit him, as they say in the puzzle, and upon what the bat was sitting. The individual objects of which I am speaking are also a riddle, and have a double sense: nor can you fix them in your mind, either as being or not-being, or both, or neither.

Then what will you do with them? I said. Can they have a better place than between being and not-being? For they are clearly not in

greater darkness or negation than not-being, or more full of light and existence than being.

That is quite true, he said.

Thus then we seem to have discovered that the many ideas which the multitude entertain about the beautiful and about all other things are tossing about in some region which is half-way between pure being and pure not-being?

We have.

Yes; and we had before agreed that anything of this kind which we might find was to be described as matter of opinion, and not as matter of knowledge; being the intermediate flux which is caught and detained by the intermediate faculty.

Quite true.

Then those who see the many beautiful, and who yet neither see absolute beauty, nor can follow any guide who points the way thither; who see the many just, and not absolute justice, and the like,—such persons may be said to have opinion but not knowledge?

That is certain.

But those who see the absolute and eternal and immutable may be said to know, and not to have opinion only?

Neither can that be denied.

The one love and embrace the subjects the knowledge, the other those of opinion? The latter are the same, as I dare say you will remember, who listened to sweet sounds and gazed upon fair colors, but would not tolerate the existence of absolute beauty.

Yes, I remember.

Shall we then be guilty of any impropriety in calling them lovers of opinion rather than lovers of wisdom, and will they be very angry with us for thus describing them?

I shall tell them not to be angry; no man should be angry at what is true.

But those who love the truth in each thing are to be called lovers of wisdom and not lovers of opinion.

Assuredly.

The Idea is thus the true reality, in that it is the unity that operates behind multiplicity, the essence of the attributes of sensory experience, the substance of which the things of this world are the predicates. The Idea is *being*, in that it always is, while temporal and spatial things are in a constant state of *becoming*, but never are. The Idea is the archetype of which the factual phenomena are the temporary, transitory reflections or shadows. They are not true reality, but

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copies of reality. Since the Idea is *being*, it also gives being to him whose imagination seizes it and dwells in it, while for him whose abode is the perceptual world there is no *being*, only a *becoming*. In being there is completion, a coming to rest, hence repose. In becoming there is a passing from one stage of completion to another, and therefore a striving, a stress, strain, and travail.

It is such an attitude towards the world of phenomenal experience that is characterized as the poetic conception of the universe. And the Platonic Idea is the poetic idea. Carlyle utters a Platonism and a poetic idea when he states that "what thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually and to represent some idea, and body it forth." Keats speaks of this idea variously as "the chief intensity," as "love immortal," as "a one far off event" towards which all of creation moves. Its peace-giving power lies in that:

Melting into its radiance, we blend,  
Mingle and so become a part of it.

It means a union of mortal with immortal, a merging with it, and therefore identical with it.

. . . if this earthly love has power to make  
Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake  
Ambition from their memories, and bring  
Their measure of content: what merest whim  
Seems all this endeavor after fame,  
To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim  
A love immortal, an immortal too.

This then is Truth immortal, everlasting, being true for all men for all time. The love of the earthly comes and goes, but the idea of love and its life-giving and life-propelling power remains. But why is this Truth also Beauty? Why is the poetic idea also an idea of beauty? The beauty is the consequence of the attitude towards the idea, and Keats would have been more correct had he interchanged the words Truth and Beauty and stated that what the Imagination seizes as Beauty is also Truth, for the imagination does not seize beauty

but truth, and the truth becomes beauty just because it is a truth of the imagination, a truth of idea and not of fact. Truth is also beauty only when it is the truth created by the imagination. It is not beauty when evolved by perception. Factual truths are not beauty. They become beauty only when the imagination has seized idea through them. Why is this so?

The imagination operates on the material supplied by perception. The general is built out of the particular, the absolute from the relative, the whole from the parts, the intangible, the idea, from the tangible, the fact. The imagination operates in perception and generates the ideational out of the perceptual. In doing so it also transforms the perceptual into the ideational, in that the means partake of the nature of the end. The means are the parts of which the end is the whole. But the whole is more than any one or all of its parts. It is built out of the parts, but is not of them in its nature. It has a nature of its own which is independent of the parts, although a result of them. Yet the parts, as parts, partake of the nature of the whole, but only partially so. They are the incomplete whole, therefore the imperfect whole, being at the same time the whole and also not the whole. They reflect the whole, are the shadows of it, but not its reality. If the parts have a meaning it is derived from the whole of which they are the parts. Their meaning is therefore extrinsic, and hence does not possess the quality of beauty. But the whole does not derive its meaning from any source other than itself. It is meaningful in itself. Its significance is what it is as a whole. Hence its value is inherent, intrinsic, and therefore beautiful.

Now such is the nature of the truth seized by the imagination in contrast with the truth derived by perception. The idea is evolved out of percepts, but its significance is independent of the percepts. The poetic idea, as the idea seized by imagination, is therefore, also beauty. Beauty may occur apart from poetic idea. But poetic idea is beauty by virtue of being what it is. The poetic idea is truth because of its universal human appeal. It is beauty because it is significant as idea, for what it is in itself. We prize our own ideals not for

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what they lead to or result in, but for what they lead from. They are not an achieving, but an achievement. They are their own justifications. They are prized for what they are in, by, and for themselves. This is their quality of beauty. The products of perception are never valued as such. Those of imagination always are. What the imagination then seizes as truth is also beauty. The truth of perception is extrinsic. That of imagination is intrinsic. When the truth of perception is transfigured by the truth of imagination, when fact becomes idea, there is beauty.

Such is poetry as idea. When extrinsic words become a medium for intrinsic idea, in a manner such that idea transforms and interpenetrates them to such an extent that the words have no significance excepting that cast upon them by idea, resulting in the identification of matter and form, an art work is the result which we call a poem because of its sensuous material, language. Poetry is thus the musical expression of pure idea; it is intrinsic idea in intrinsic form. Whenever such a combination occurs we have poetry. All expression of significant, imaginative experience in adequate language is poetry. The line of demarcation between prose and poetry is so thin as to be vanishing. There is much prose that is poetry, while a good deal of poetry is not even good prose. The mechanical spacing of lines on a page does not make a poem, nor does writing lack poetic quality just because it appears in the form of prose. There are dramas, novels, and essays that are far more poetic than much that passes for poetry. Plato is more of a poet than many officially designated poets. All of Shakespeare is poetry. Turgenev is a poet. There is more poetry in the prose writings of George Santayana than in most of the literary output of Wordsworth or Byron. A lyric poem is poetry only in the degree to which its melody is the melodic utterance of poetic idea. An epic, dramatic, or narrative poem is poetry only in those parts where poetic idea is wedded inseparably to melodic language. The great poem is the complete balancing of poetic idea and musical language, a creative attainment of which Shakespeare is the supreme model.





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